



# Making up time

The impact of the pandemic on young adults in Canada

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Environics Institute for Survey Research conducts relevant and original public opinion and social research related to issues of public policy and social change. It is through such research that organizations and individuals can better understand Canada today, how it has been changing, and where it may be heading.

The Future Skills Centre (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Ryerson University, Blueprint ADE, and The Conference Board of Canada, and is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

The Diversity Institute conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Our action-oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by underrepresented groups, leading practices to effect change, and producing concrete results. The Diversity Institute is a research lead for the Future Skills Centre.

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.



# About the Survey on Employment and Skills

The Survey on Employment and Skills is conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with the Future Skills Centre and the Diversity Institute at Ryerson University. The third wave of the study consists of a survey of 5,913 Canadians age 18 and over, conducted between June 1 and June 28, 2021, in all provinces and territories. It was conducted both online (in the provinces) and by telephone (in the territories). The survey includes oversamples of Canadians living in smaller provinces and territories, those under the age of 35, racialized Canadians and Canadians who identify as Indigenous, in order to provide a better portrait of the range of experiences across the country. Unless otherwise indicated, the survey results in this report are weighted by age, gender, region, education, racial identity and Indigenous identity, to ensure that they are representative of the Canadian population as whole.

In the survey, participants are asked to say if they identify as an Indigenous person, that is, as First Nations (Status or non-Status, or Native American), Métis or Inuk (Inuit). Those who identify as Indigenous are then asked to specify whether they are First Nations (Status or non-Status, or Native American), Métis or Inuk (Inuit). In this report, those identifying as First Nations, Métis or Inuk are generally combined together as “Indigenous Peoples,” to maximize the sample size, but when possible, results are presented for First Nations or Métis individuals specifically.

The survey also asks non-Indigenous participants which of a list of racial or cultural categories best describes them. The categories are those employed in the Census of Canada. Multiple responses are allowed. In this report, the category of “non-racialized” or “white” refers to those who select only “white” as the category that best describes them. “Racialized” refers to those who select any category other than white, on its own or in combination with another (including white). Specific identities such as Black, South Asian or Chinese include both single and multiple responses that include that category.

This report focuses primarily on the experiences of Canadians between the ages of 18 and 34 (a sample of 2,648 individuals), in comparison with older age groups. When relevant, results are presented for the following age sub-groups:

Age group	Sample size (unweighted)
18-20	665
21-24	595
25-29	635
30-34	753
35-39	548
40-44	537
45-49	532
50-59	836
60-69	524
70+	288
Total	5,913

Where possible, results are compared to those obtained from the first two waves of the survey, conducted in March 2020 and December 2020.

Detailed data tables are available under separate cover; these present the results for the survey questions covered in this report by population demographics and other relevant characteristics (see the study project page at [www.environicsinstitute.org](http://www.environicsinstitute.org)). All results are presented as percentages unless otherwise noted.

# Foreward

The COVID-19 pandemic affected Canadians from all backgrounds and in all age groups, but not everyone was affected in the same way. Older Canadians were most at risk of severe illness or death, and likely felt the greatest sense of isolation due to the restrictions on face-to-face interactions during the prolonged lockdown periods. Middle-aged Canadians were the most likely to manage a combination of disruptions to work and family. For many, this meant juggling working from home for themselves with online learning for their children. In the case of young adults, the pandemic disrupted their plans to complete their education and establish themselves in new careers, as well as their ability to build their social networks and take key steps forward in their transition to adulthood.

This report explores the experiences of young adults, defined here as those between the ages of 18 and 34. The situation of older Canadians is no less important, but putting the spotlight on those under the age of 35 allows for a more careful consideration of the particular challenges they have faced. This in turn can inform the development of specific policies that can help younger Canadians benefit as fully and quickly as possible from a post-pandemic recovery.

The analysis presented here is based on the findings of the third wave of the Survey

on Employment and Skills. In early 2020, the Survey on Employment and Skills began as a project designed to explore Canadians' experiences with the changing nature of work, including technology-driven disruptions, increasing insecurity and shifting skills requirements. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was expanded to investigate the impact of the crisis on Canadians' employment, earnings and work environments. A second wave of the survey was conducted in December 2020, and a third wave in June 2021. The third wave of the survey is especially well-suited to exploring the experience of younger Canadians because of the structure of the survey sample. The overall large national sample of 5,913 adults includes 2,648 individuals between the ages of 18 and 34.

The June 2021 survey reveals how the greater insecurity of younger workers in the labour market translated into a greater likelihood of losing hours of work, becoming unemployed, or losing income as result of the pandemic. In many cases, those in their early 20s have been particularly affected in these ways. Negative impacts on employment and earnings have also been much more common for youth who identify as Indigenous.

In terms of the pandemic's impact on education, three groups of young adults stand out as being more adversely affected: young adults who are Indigenous; young adults with a disability (i.e. those who have a condition or difference that limits the amount of activity they can do on a typical day); and young adults who identify as Black. Finally, the survey finds that, while a postsecondary education has helped to dampen the effect of previous economic shocks, this has not been the case during the pandemic for the most recent postsecondary graduates.

The different experiences of each age group during the pandemic should be met with tailored policy responses. For older Canadians, a spotlight has been shone on the need to improve the quality of long-term care. Policy proposals related to child care, guaranteed sick days and flexible work arrangements respond to the needs of many of those already established in their careers.

Policymakers should be no less focused on the situation of younger Canadians. Of particular concern is the question of whether the setbacks many young adults have experienced in recent months are temporary or will be longer lasting. The extent to which Canada's young adults will soon be able to look back on short-term disruptions to their plans, or instead prepare for a lifetime of negative consequences arising from the pandemic, is not yet clear. And while the economy will eventually recover, the question remains as to whether that recovery will be wide-reaching, or whether (and why) it will leave some groups of Canadians behind. The progress of Canadian young adults from all backgrounds should be closely monitored, with an eye to designing and implementing public policies and employer practices to ensure those most affected can catch up as quickly as possible.

# Acknowledgments

This research was made possible through the contributions of a number of individuals, including Noel Baldwin, Pedro Barata, Tricia Williams and Samir Khan from the Future Skills Centre; and Wendy Cukier, Michael Urban and Christopher Zou from the Diversity Institute at Ryerson University. The study partners would like to thank the members of the survey's Indigenous Advisory Committee for their comments and contributions: Kelly J. Lendsay (Indigenous Works), Samantha Morton (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business) and Kory Wilson (British Columbia Institute of Technology). The study partners would also like to acknowledge the contributions of John Otoo of the Environics Research Group for leading the data collection. Finally, we express our sincere thanks to the thousands of Canadians from all backgrounds who took the time to participate in the study.

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# Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic affected Canadians from all backgrounds and in all age groups, but not everyone was affected in the same way. This report explores the experiences of younger adults, defined as those between the ages of 18 and 34. It documents not only the extent to which Canadian young adults as a whole have been especially hard hit economically by the pandemic, but also how specific groups of young adults – notably young adults who identify as Indigenous, Black young adults, young adults with a disability, young adults without a postsecondary education, and recent postsecondary graduates – have each encountered particular challenges.

## The general impact of the pandemic

The proportion reporting an impact of the pandemic on their day-to-day life is highest among the youngest age groups, particularly among those age 21 to 24. The proportion reporting an impact of the pandemic on their day-to-day life declined slightly between December 2020 and June 2021 for middle-aged Canadians, and more noticeably for older Canadians, but held steady for those under the age of 35. These findings suggest that the pandemic's general impact has been felt somewhat more acutely and somewhat more persistently among young Canadian adults.

## The impact of the pandemic on employment

The greater insecurity of younger workers in the labour market translated into a greater likelihood of losing hours of work, becoming unemployed, or losing income as result of the pandemic.

During the pandemic, workers under the age of 30, and especially under the age of 25, were the most likely to lose hours of work as a result of the economic shutdowns. This experience is most common for those age 18 to 24. Older workers (age 60 and over) are the most likely to have become unemployed as a result of the pandemic, but the next most likely group are workers under the age of 30. Excluding workers age 60 and over, this experience is most common for those age 21 to 29. Combining these experiences, the proportion that experienced either loss of hours of work or loss of employment (or both) is again highest among those under the age of 30 (and especially those age 21 to 24).

Another important effect of the pandemic was disruption in the earnings of Canadian workers, and the likelihood of experiencing such disruption increases as age decreases. Looking at the differences across age groups, three distinct patterns emerge. Most workers over the age of 40 saw no change in earnings. Among workers between the age of 25 and 39, the most common experience was also no change in earnings, but this was the case for fewer than one in two.

The next most common outcome for those in this age group was a drop in earnings. But for those between the age of 18 and 24, the most common experience was a decline in earnings (related to their greater likelihood of losing hours of work or becoming unemployed).

## Education and skills training during the pandemic

The pandemic caused disruption not only to the labour market, but to education as well.

Among Canadians age 18 to 24, there was an increase during the pandemic in the proportion that are neither working nor enrolled in formal education programs, though this change occurred in the first nine months of the pandemic (in 2020) and not more recently. These individuals, typically referred to as NEET (not employed, or in education or training), represent an especially vulnerable group and should be a focus of policymakers as they shape Canada's economic recovery from the pandemic.

About one in three young Canadian adults changed their plans for postsecondary education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, either discontinuing or postponing their studies, or returning to the classroom. Among those in the youngest age cohort (age 18 to 20), one in four stopped or postponed their postsecondary studies as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while just under one in five started or returned to their postsecondary studies.

In terms of skills training, younger Canadians, particularly those under the



*During the pandemic, workers under the age of 30, and especially under the age of 25, were the most likely to **lose hours of work** as a result of the economic shutdowns.*

age of 24, are more likely than their older counterparts to have changed their plans, either stopping or postponing skills training or starting new training, as a result of the pandemic. The likelihood of starting new job-related skills training is much lower among youth who are unemployed or who had their hours of work reduced during the pandemic (despite the fact that they may be among those most in need of this training). This suggests that the negative impact of the pandemic on skills training has been felt not just by youth in general, but specifically by youth who have had most difficulty securing employment or whose work was interfered by the pandemic.

At the same time, despite these disruptions, younger Canadians remain more likely than older workers to access employer-delivered training at work.

Almost one in two Canadians age 18 to 34 participated in either employer-provided or self-directed skills training since the start of the pandemic. Younger workers were also more likely than their older counterparts to take a work-related skills training course because they became unemployed or were working fewer hours because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participation in skills training was more and not less common for those who had shifted to working from home during the pandemic.

For one in two of those age 18 to 34, the skills training they received during the pandemic was also related to the changes in the workplace caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as how to keep safe from the COVID-19 virus or how to manage working from home.

## Health and well-being

Previous survey waves showed how Canadians' assessments of their physical health and, more notably, their mental health have become worse during the pandemic. This is an important finding, not just in terms of individual well-being but, due to the significant negative impact of poor mental health on employment and career advancement, also in terms of the ability of the economy to recover once the immediate danger of the pandemic has passed. In the case of mental health, the extent of the negative change was greater for older age groups than for younger ones; nonetheless, younger Canadians continued to be less likely than their older counterparts to rate their mental health as excellent or very good. This remains the case, according to the most recent survey wave. And as before,

the situation of younger women is the most alarming: only one in four women between the ages of 18 and 34 rate their mental health as excellent or good. Moreover, the experience of being employed does not appear to have as positive an impact on mental health in the case of young women as it does in the case of young men.

Over the past 18 months, however, there has been remarkable stability in the hopefulness and self-confidence of young Canadians, even though those in this age group experienced significant disruption at work and in education due to the pandemic. Once again, however, men tend to have a more positive outlook than women. This is especially true among younger adults (those age 18 to 20).

## Differences in experiences among younger Canadians

Within the 18- to 34-year-old age cohort, experiences differ in important ways among population groups.

In terms of loss of hours of work, loss of employment or loss of income, the experience of young adults who identify as Indigenous stands out. As a result of the pandemic, they are among those most likely to have had their hours of work reduced or to have become unemployed (or both) or to be earning less than before the pandemic started.

Other groups more likely than average to have been adversely affected in these ways include young adults who have a condition or difference that limits the amount of activity they can do on a typical day (referred to

hereafter as persons with a disability), young adults who work in occupations related to sales and services or trades, transportation or manual labour, young adults without a postsecondary education, and young adults with lower household incomes.

In terms of the pandemic's impact on education, the experience of three groups stand out: young adults who are Indigenous; young adults with a disability; and young adults who identify as Black. Young adults in each of these three groups are much more likely than average to have stopped or postponed their postsecondary education due to the pandemic.

The same pattern holds when it come to job-related skills training: among young adults, the likelihood of stopping or postponing skills training as a result of the pandemic is highest among those who identify as Indigenous, those with a disability, and those who identify as Black.

At the same time, however, despite these disruptions, within the 18-to-34 age group, participation in employer-provided skills training during the pandemic remains more common for these same groups. Participation rates are higher than average for Indigenous workers, for workers who identify as South Asian or Black, and for those with a disability.

These patterns are quite different when it comes to questions about health and well-being. For instance, among those age 18 to 34, the proportion reporting excellent or very good mental health is highest among those who identify as Indigenous, Black or South Asian and lower for those who identify

as white or Chinese. Those who identify as Indigenous, South Asian or Black also tend to have somewhat more positive than average outlook on their lives in general, while the outlook of those who identify as Chinese is generally less positive.

## The experience of recent graduates

Historically, a postsecondary education has helped to buffer individual experiences of economic shocks. However, this has not been the case during the pandemic for the most recent postsecondary graduates.

For those between the ages of 18 and 24, the pandemic's negative impact on employment was felt more, not less, acutely as educational attainment rose. Moreover, for those in this age group, having a university degree did not reduce the likelihood of earning less from work as a result of the pandemic – in contrast to the experience of university graduates in older age groups.

It is also notable that, among those age 25 to 29, postsecondary graduates and especially university graduates were more likely than average to say that the pandemic has affected their day-to-day life to a great or some extent. This speaks to some challenges encountered by those who had recently finished postsecondary education and were looking to establish themselves in the labour market as the pandemic took hold. This situation should be closely monitored in the coming months and years, with an eye to designing and implementing policies to minimize the pandemic's lingering negative effects on this age cohort.

# The General Impact of the Pandemic

**The pandemic's impact has been felt somewhat more acutely and somewhat more persistently among young Canadian adults.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a widespread impact, affecting Canadians in all parts of the country, of all ages and from different backgrounds.

Overall, in June 2021, 7 in 10 (70%) reported that their day-to-day life has been affected to a great extent (26%) or to some extent (44%) by the COVID-19 pandemic, while 28 percent said it has been affected not very much (24%) or not at all (5%). The proportion saying they have been affected to a great or to some extent has declined slightly (by four points, from 74%) since December 2020.

Generally speaking, differences among age groups are relatively modest, except in the

case of seniors, who are much less likely to have felt an impact on their day-to-day life. That said, there are two nuances worth noting:

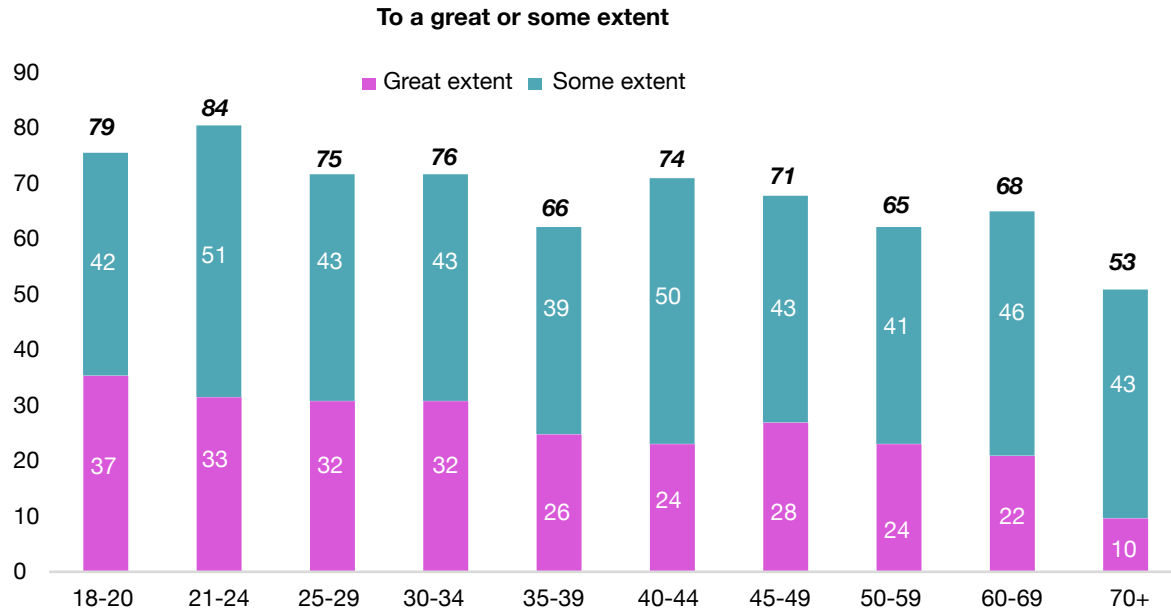
- > The proportion reporting an impact (to a great or some extent) of the pandemic on their day-to-day life is highest among the youngest age groups, particularly among those age 21 to 24, where it reaches 84 percent.
- > The proportion reporting an impact of the pandemic on their day-to-day life declined slightly between December 2020 and June 2021 for middle-aged Canadians, and more noticeably for older Canadians, but held steady for those under the age of 35.

These findings suggest that the pandemic's impact has been felt somewhat more acutely and somewhat more persistently among young Canadian adults.



## Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on day-to-day life

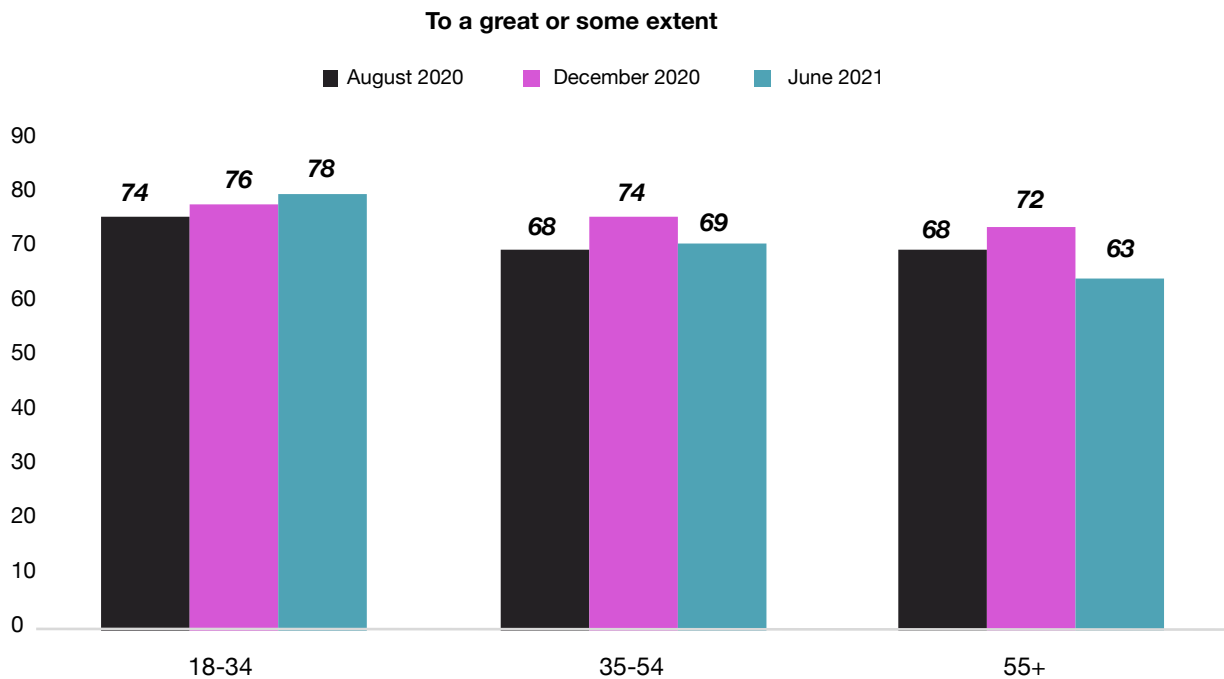
By age group



Q.24a This question is about your experience with the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally speaking, to what extent has your day-to-day life been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

## Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on day-to-day life

By age group | August 2020 to June 2021



Q.24a This question is about your experience with the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally speaking, to what extent has your day-to-day life been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Among Canadians age 18 to 34, there are also some other differences in how the pandemic has been felt. Regionally, it was less likely to have affected day-to-day life to a great or some extent among those in this age group who live in Quebec or the North. But the pandemic was more likely to have affected day-to-day life to a great or some extent among those in this age group:

- > who are students, self-employed or unemployed;
- > who are first- or second-generation immigrants;<sup>1</sup>
- > who identify as South Asian;
- > who identify as racialized and who are first-generation immigrants;
- > who identify as First Nations or Métis.

Overall, within this age group (18 to 34), there is little difference in the impact of the pandemic by educational attainment. But among those age 25 to 29 specifically, the impact is somewhat higher than average among postsecondary graduates, especially university graduates.

It should be emphasized, however, that the differences between the experiences of different population groups are generally fairly modest – with the exception of differences across regions (there are larger differences between those living in Ontario or B.C., on the one hand, and those living in Quebec or the North, on the other).

1 In this report, first-generation immigrants are those born outside of Canada, while second-generation immigrants are those born in Canada but with at least one parent born outside of Canada. Those born in Canada to Canadian-born parents are third generation plus.

**TABLE 1**

Effect of the pandemic on day-to-day life (age 18 to 34 only)

<b>Generally speaking, to what extent has your day-to-day life been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?</b>				
<b>Category</b>	<b>Population group (among those age 18 to 34)</b>	<b>To a great extent</b>	<b>To some extent</b>	<b>To a great or some extent</b>
Total age 18 to 34	Total	34	45	78
Gender	Women	34	46	80
	Men	33	44	77
Region	Newfoundland and Labrador	30	53	83
	Maritimes	27	48	75
	Quebec	26	38	65
	Ontario	42	42	85
	Prairies	31	49	80
	B.C.	29	55	84
	North <sup>2</sup>	26	34	60
Employment Status	Employed full-time	31	46	77
	Employed part-time	34	46	80
	Self-employed	48	37	85
	Student	37	49	86
	Unemployed (and looking for work)	39	46	85
Educational attainment	No college diploma or university degree	34	43	77
	College diploma or university degree	32	48	80



Generation in Canada	First generation	34	49	84
	Second generation	32	53	85
	Third generation plus	34	40	74
Racial or cultural identity <sup>3</sup>	Non-racialized (white)	34	40	74
	South Asian	36	50	86
	Black	41	38	79
	Chinese	26	52	78
	Other racialized	26	58	84
Racial or cultural identity and generation in Canada	Racialized and first generation	34	50	84
Indigenous identity <sup>4</sup>	Indigenous (total)	34	47	82
	First Nations	41	43	84
	Métis	22	61	83
	Non-Indigenous	34	45	78
Disability	Always or often limits	28	50	78
	Occasionally limits	42	46	87
	None	32	44	75

Note: Figures in the first two columns may not add up to the total in the third column due to rounding.

- 2 The sample size for those age 18 and 34 and living in the Territories is 94. Results for the Territories when reported separated are unweighted.
- 3 Throughout this report, the category of non-racialized or white includes those who identify only as white, while the category of racialized includes all those who select any identity other than white or Indigenous. Some of those who are racialized select multiple identities, which in some cases include white in combination with another identity. The category of “other racialized” includes those who are racialized and select identities other than South Asian, Black or Chinese (these other identity groups are too small to report individually).
- 4 Indigenous identity includes those identifying as First Nations, Métis or Inuit. The sample size for those age 18 to 34 who identify as Inuk is too small to present separately.

# The Impact of the Pandemic on Employment

The proportion of Canadians that experienced either loss of hours of work and loss of employment (or both) due to the pandemic is highest among those under the age of 30, especially those age 21 to 24. Loss of income due to the pandemic is also more common among younger workers. Among those age 18 to 34, workers who are Indigenous, who work in occupations related to sales and services, or who have a disability are among those most likely to have experienced either loss of hours of work or loss of employment due to the pandemic (or both).

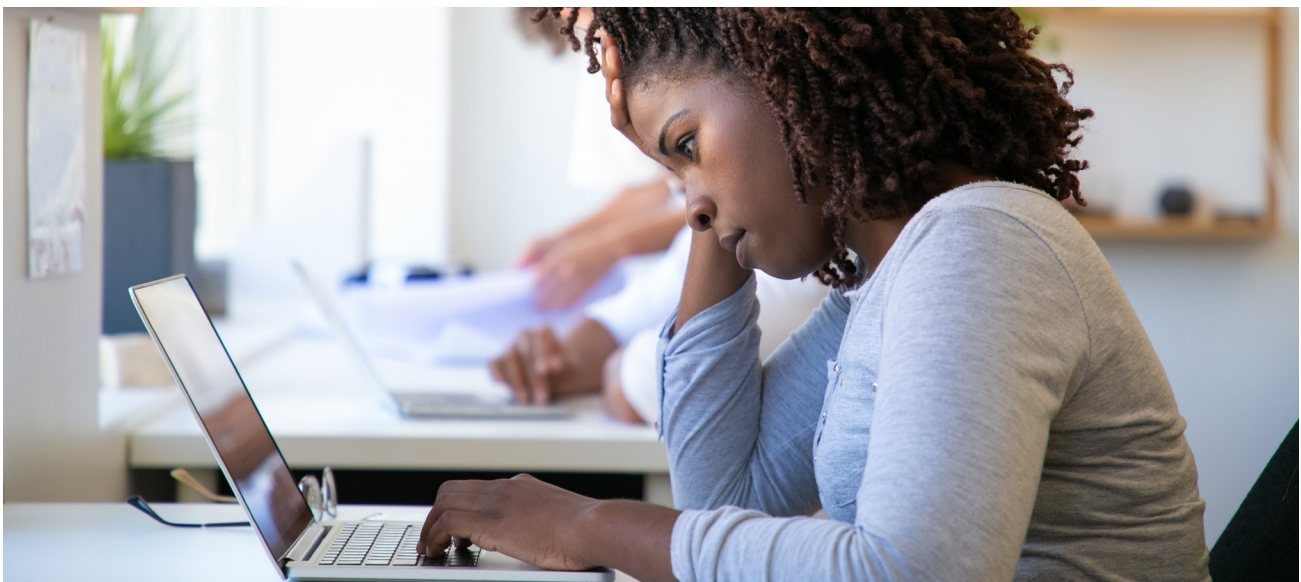
Younger workers were more vulnerable to the economic impacts of the pandemic as they have had less time to securely establish themselves in the labour market. Compared to older age groups, those between the ages of 18 and 24 who are in the labour market are:

- > more likely to be working part-time;
- > less likely to be employed on a permanent basis;
- > more likely to working in retail or food services occupations, and less likely to working in professional or executive positions.<sup>5</sup>

This greater insecurity translated to a greater likelihood of losing hours of work or becoming unemployed, or of losing income as result of the pandemic.

## Hours of work

During the pandemic, workers under the age of 30, and especially those under the age of 25, were the most likely to lose hours of work (without losing their jobs) as a result of the economic shutdowns. This experience was most common for those age 18 to 24 – 34 percent of those in the age group had their hours of work reduced, compared to the Canadian average of 22 percent.

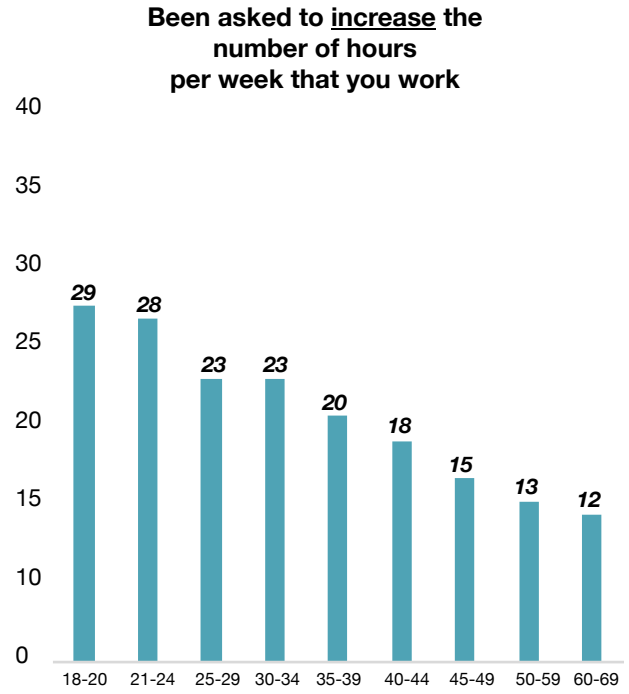
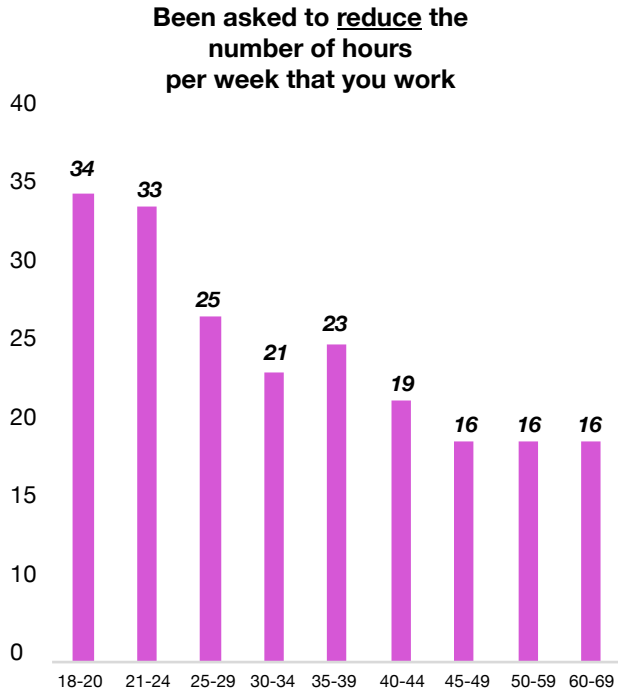


5 This was also the case prior to the pandemic, as measured by Wave 1 (March 2020) of the Survey on Employment and Skills.

# Impact of the pandemic on hours worked

By age group

Subsample: those in the labour force



Q.24b And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

Younger workers, however, were also more likely than their older counterparts to have been asked to increase their hours of work, indicating that the experiences of younger workers during the pandemic were somewhat more polarized than average (meaning that fewer reported no change either way). Twenty-nine percent of those age 18 to 24 were asked to increase the number of hours they worked because of the pandemic, compared to the Canadian average of 19 percent.

Overall, one in two (49%) workers under the age of 35 had their hours of work disrupted by the pandemic (either decreasing or increasing), compared to 34 percent of those age 35 to 54, and 26 percent of those age 55 or older.

Among those age 18 to 34, the loss of hours of work due to the pandemic is most likely to have been experienced by those who:

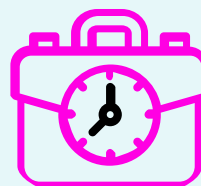
- > are Indigenous (45%) (and particularly First Nations);
- > work in the sales and services sector (38%);
- > have a disability (34%);
- > have annual household incomes under \$60,000 (33%);
- > are employed in the public sector (33%);
- > have not continued their formal education past high school (32%).

(The average for those age 18 to 34 overall is 28 percent.)

An increase in hours of work due to the pandemic is more likely to have been experienced by those who:

- > have apprenticeship or trades training (46%);
- > have a disability (41%);
- > are Métis (35%);<sup>6</sup>
- > identify as Black (34%), South Asian (34%) or Chinese (33%);
- > are members of a labour union (34%);
- > are employed in the public sector (33%);
- > work as professionals or executives (32%);
- > live in Quebec (31%).

(The average for those age 18 to 34 is 25 percent.)



*Younger workers were more **vulnerable** to the economic impacts of the pandemic as they have had less time to securely establish themselves in the labour market.*

<sup>6</sup> The figure for those who identify as First Nations (21%) is much lower and closer to the average.

# Unemployment

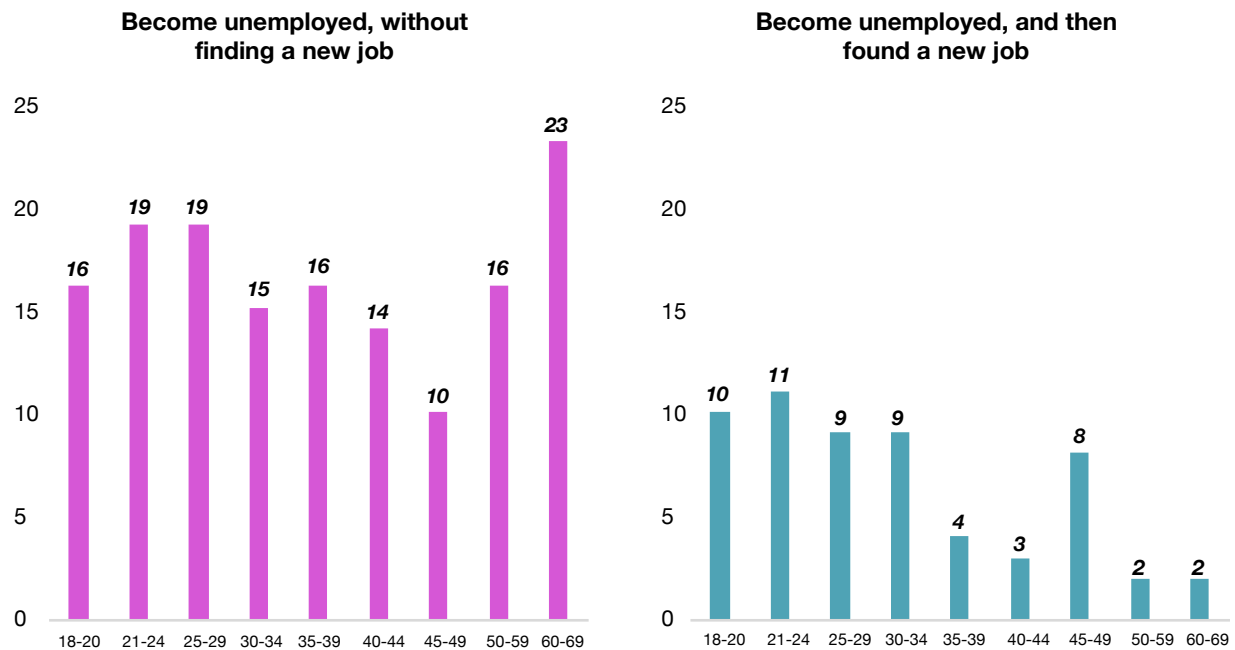
## LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

Older workers (age 60 and over) are the most likely to have become unemployed as a result of the pandemic and to have been unable to find a new job at the time of the survey in the summer of 2021. The next most likely group is workers under the age of 30. Excluding workers age 60 and over, this experience is most common for those age 21 to 29 – 19 percent of those in this age group became unemployed without finding a new job, compared to 15 percent of those age 30 to 59.

### Impact of the pandemic on employment

By age group

Subsample: those in the labour force



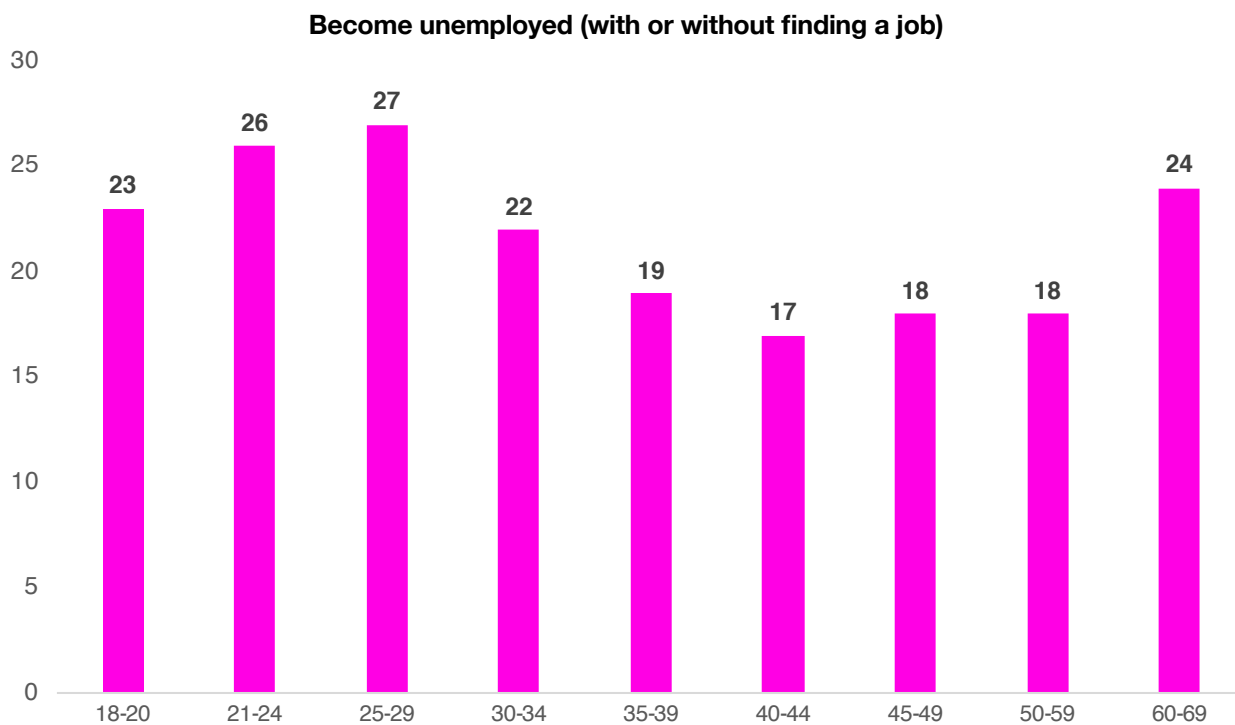
Q.24b And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

The pattern is similar when we look at all those who became unemployed as a result of the pandemic, regardless of whether they found a new job or not. This experience was most common for those between the ages of 21 and 29 (27%) and less common for those between the ages of 30 and 59 (19%).

## Impact of the pandemic on employment (combined)

By age group

Subsample: those in the labour force



Q.24b And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

Among those age 18 to 34, unemployment (whether temporary or ongoing) due to the pandemic is most likely to have been experienced by those who:

- > are Indigenous (31%);
- > work in occupations related to sales and services (29%) or trades, transportation or manual labour (28%);
- > work in the not-for-profit sector (27%);
- > did not continue their formal education past high school (26%).

Conversely, this experience is least common among those who:

- > identify their racial or cultural background as Chinese (10%);
- > live in Quebec (16%);
- > are employed in the public sector (19%);
- > are employed in professional or executive positions (20%);

- > have annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more (20%);
- > have a university degree (21%).

(The average for those age 18 to 34 is 24 percent.)

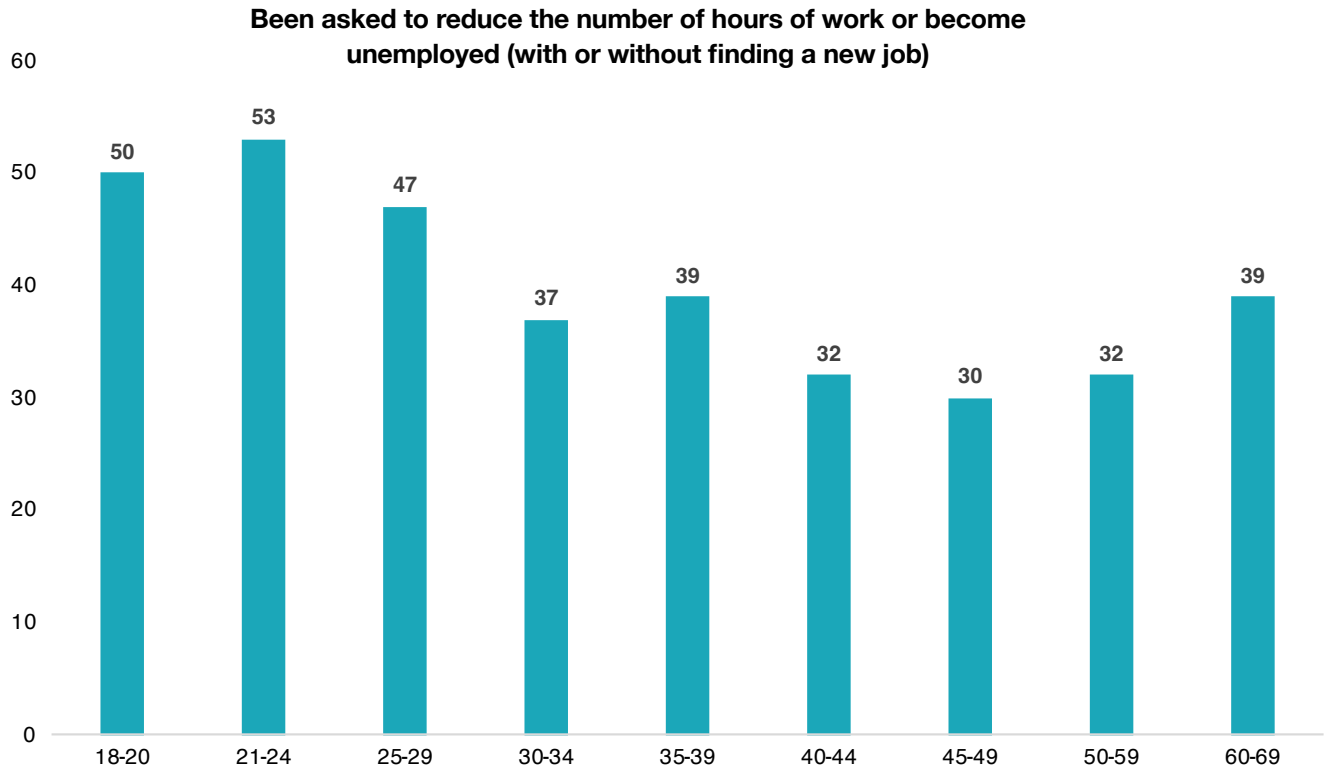
## **LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT OR OF HOURS OF WORK**

It is possible to combine the answers to the questions about loss of hours of work and loss of employment, and to look at how many experienced at least one of these setbacks due to the pandemic (that is, the proportion that either had their hours of work reduced, or that became unemployed [whether or not they subsequently found a new job], or both). The proportion that experienced either loss of hours of work or loss of employment (or both) is again highest among those under the age of 30 (50%), and especially those age 21 to 24 (53%) – about 20 points higher than for those age 40 to 59 (32%).

## Impact of the pandemic on hours worked or employment (combined)

By age group

Subsample: those in the labour force



Q.24b And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?



Again, among those age 18 to 34, these experiences (combined) are more common for some groups than for others. They are more common among those who:

- > are Indigenous (67%) (and especially First Nations);
- > work in occupations related to sales and services (57%);
- > have a disability (54%);
- > have annual household incomes under \$60,000 (53%);
- > did not continue their formal education past high school (51%);
- > are men (50%).

(The average for those age 18 to 34 is 46 percent.)

## **THE EXPERIENCE OF RECENT GRADUATES**

In looking at the overall results by education, it is important to distinguish further between older and younger graduates within the 18- to 34-year-old age group.

- > Overall, those with more education are less likely to have experienced a loss

of hours of work or of employment as a result of the pandemic. This is in keeping with the general expectation that having a postsecondary education helps to buffer the individual impact of economic shocks.

- > However, while this is the case for 18- to 34-year-olds as a whole, it is not the case for the most recent graduates – those between the ages of 18 and 24. In fact, for this youngest age group, the opposite occurs: the pandemic’s impact was felt more acutely as educational attainment rose.
- > Recent university graduates (those in the 18-to-24 age group) are much more likely than graduates who are slightly older (25 to 34) to have experienced either a loss of hours of work or unemployment, or both.<sup>7</sup> This speaks to the specific challenges encountered by those who had recently finished postsecondary education and were looking to establish themselves in the labour market as the pandemic took hold. At this time, it is not clear whether this is only a temporary set-back or whether the pandemic will have a longer-lasting economic impact on this younger cohort of graduates.

<sup>7</sup> The same pattern holds when each of the experiences (unemployment, with or without finding a new job, and loss of hours of work) is looked at individually.

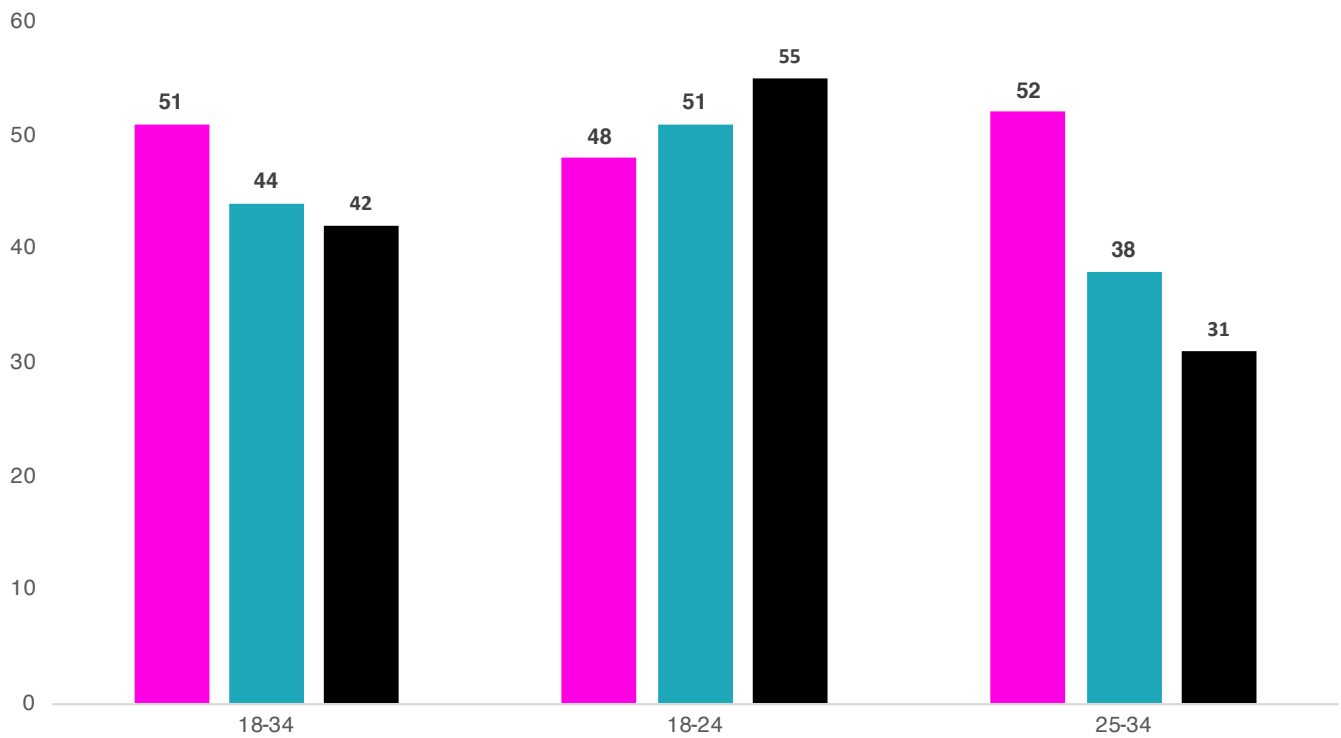
## Impact of the pandemic on hours worked or employment (combined)

By age group and educational attainment

Subsample: those in the labour force

**Been asked to reduce the number of hours of work or become unemployed (with or without finding a new job)**

■ High school or less ■ Trades or college ■ University



Q.24b And as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced any of the following?

## **GENERAL EXPERIENCES OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

Another way to assess the impact of the pandemic is to compare experiences of unemployment between the first wave of the survey, which took place in March 2020 just as the pandemic arrived in Canada, and the third wave, which took place in June 2021.

Each of these surveys asked those who are currently employed whether, at any time in the previous 12 months, they had personally experienced a period of unemployment lasting for two weeks or longer.<sup>8</sup> The results provide an insight into how much movement there is in and out of employment, by showing how many of those currently employed may recently have been looking for work.<sup>9</sup>

In March 2020, one in four (24%) workers who were employed at that time said that, in the previous 12 months, they had personally experienced a period of unemployment lasting for two weeks or longer. In June 2021, this figure had risen by four points, to 28 percent. But this increase was not spread out evenly across age groups.

While the youngest workers (between the ages of 18 and 24) are the most likely to have experienced a period of unemployment in the past year, there was little change between the two surveys – reflecting the fact

that it is not unusual for many workers in this age group to experience volatility in their employment status.

In contrast, change over time is more evident in the case of workers in their late 20s and early 30s. Those in these age groups were more likely in June 2021 than in March 2020 to have experienced unemployment in the past year (up six points for those age 25 to 29, and 12 points for those age 30 to 34). Even though these age groups are not the most likely to report a loss of unemployment due to the pandemic, this comparison shows that they were nonetheless still affected.

Among those between the ages of 25 and 34, the increased likelihood of experiencing unemployment over the past 12 months occurred across all levels of educational attainment: it rose by nine points for those without a postsecondary education, by five points for those with trades or apprenticeship training or a college diploma, and by six points for those with a university degree.

Older workers, by contrast, were only slightly more likely in June 2021 than in March 2020 to report experiencing unemployment in the past year, with the notable exception of workers in their 60s – among this oldest age group, the likelihood of experiencing unemployment doubled, from 13 to 25 percent.

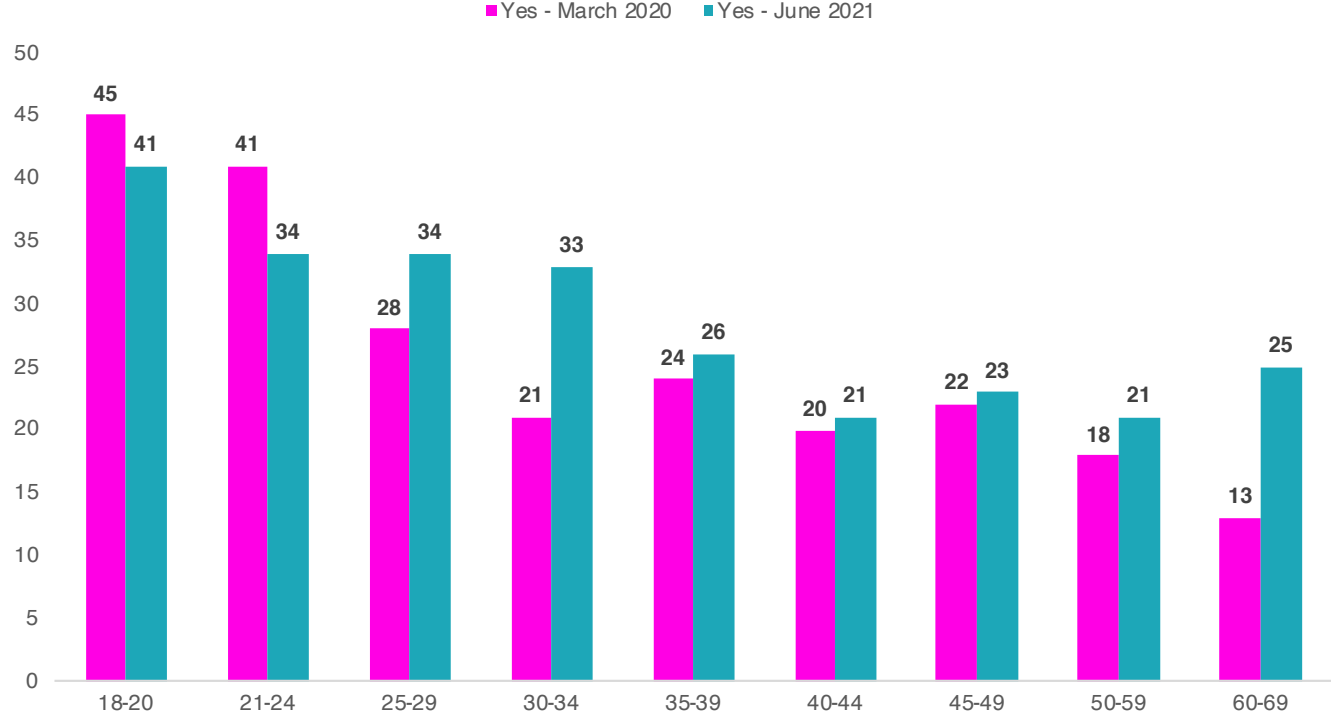
8 The survey question specified that “by unemployment, we mean that you wanted to work but could not find a job at that time.”

9 Note that because this question is asked only to those currently working, it does not take into account those who remained unemployed or who left the labour market.

# Experienced unemployment in the past 12 months

By age group

Subsample: those who are currently employed

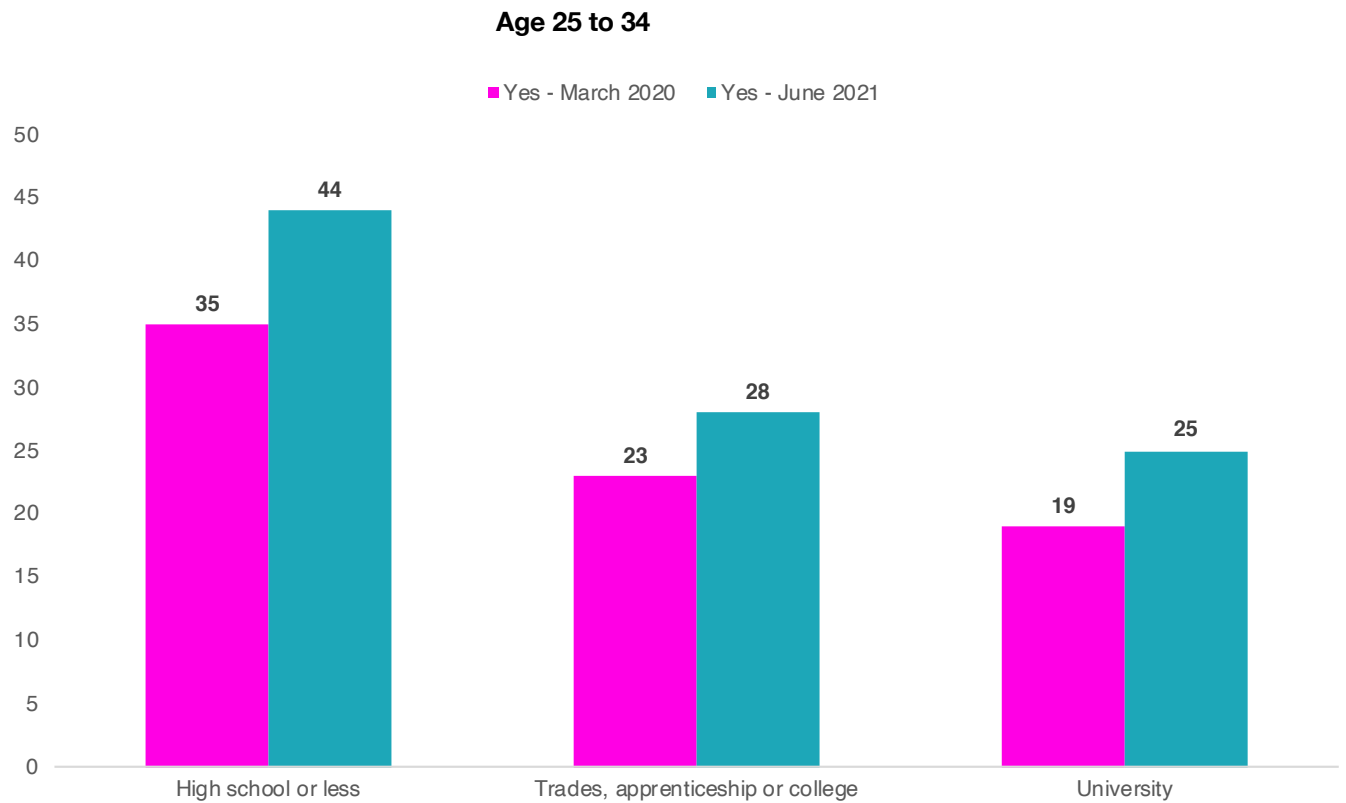


Q.20 In the last 12 months, have you personally experienced a period of unemployment that lasted for two weeks or longer? By unemployment, we mean that you wanted to work but could not find a job at that time.

## Experienced unemployment in the past 12 months

By educational attainment

Subsample: between the ages of 25 and 34



Q.20 In the last 12 months, have you personally experienced a period of unemployment that lasted for two weeks or longer? By unemployment, we mean that you wanted to work but could not find a job at that time.

## Income

Another important effect of the pandemic was a disruption in the earnings of Canadian workers. In June 2021, one in three (33%) reported that they were earning less money from work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while 46 percent said there had been no change. Less common, but not insignificant, was an increase in earnings: 15 percent reported they were earning more money at work as a result of the pandemic. These figures are similar to those reported in December 2020 (at that time, 36% reported a drop in earnings, 46% saw no change, and 12% said earnings had increased). This suggests that most of the adverse effects of the pandemic on earnings had already been felt by the end of 2020.

Looking at the differences across age groups (using the most recent survey from June 2021), it is clear that the likelihood of there having been no change in earnings rises with age. More specifically, three distinct patterns emerge:

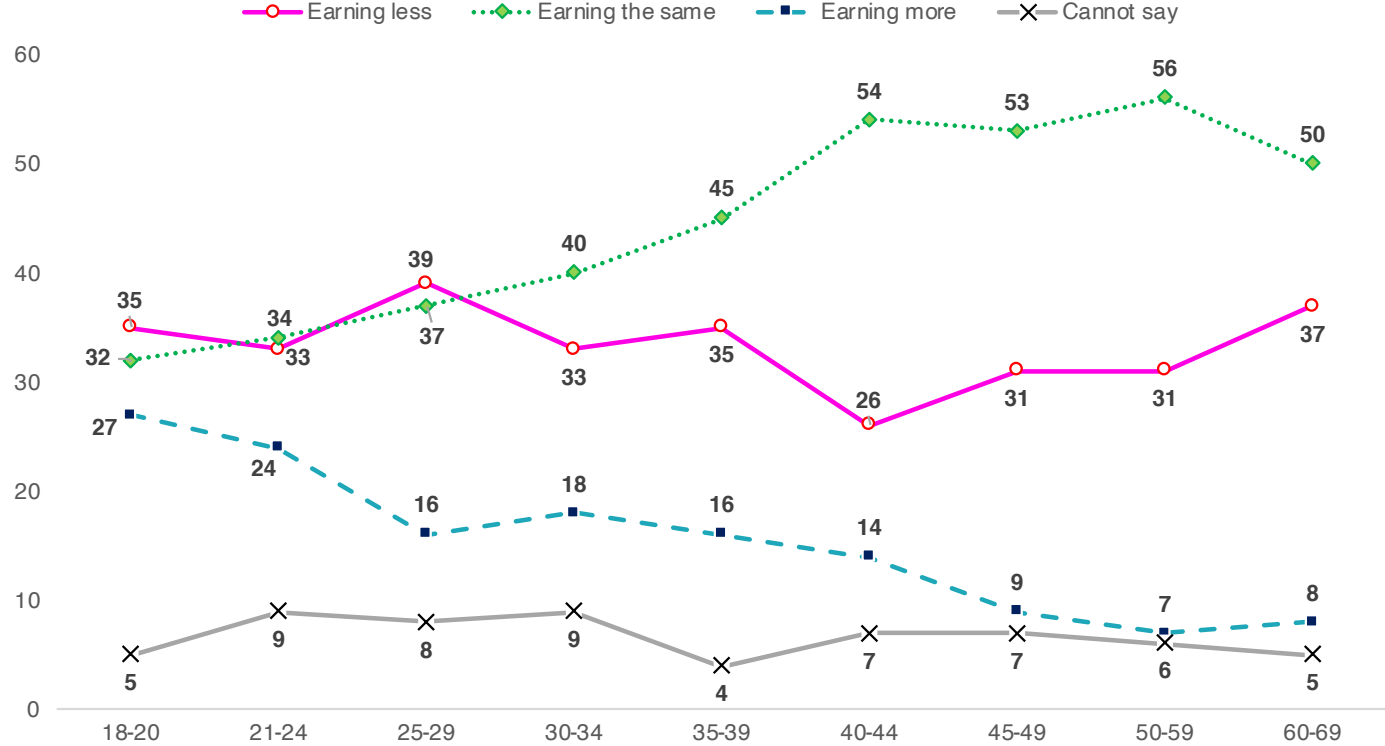
- > Among workers over the age of 40, most saw no change in earnings, though a significant minority saw a decline. Relatively few saw an increase in earnings due to the pandemic.
- > Among workers between the age of 25 and 39, no change in earnings was generally the most common experience – but this was the case for fewer than one in two. The next most common outcome was a drop in earnings, but roughly one in six saw an increase in earnings.
- > Among workers between the age of 18 and 24, the most common experience was a decline in earnings. But those in this age group are also the most likely to have seen an increase in earnings (consistent with the finding, previously mentioned, about this group also being the most likely to have been asked to work more hours), which may be explained less by the pandemic itself and more by the fact that many of these youngest workers may only recently have entered the workforce.



# Change in employment income due to the pandemic

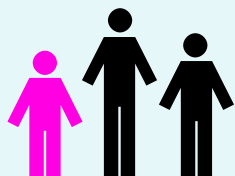
By age group

Subsample: those in the labour force



Q.24c Has the total amount of money you earn from work changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Looking further at differences within the 18 to 34 age group that is the focus of this report, both employment status and occupation are key factors. Among 18- to 34-years-olds, 35 percent report earning less due to the pandemic, but this figure is lower among full-time employees (32%) compared to those working part-time (38%) and those who are self-employed (39%). It is also lower for those in professional or executive positions (23%) compared to those working in sales- or service-related occupations (45%) or in trades, transportations or manual labour (37%).



*The proportion earning less is also higher for those who identify as **Indigenous** (49%) and those who have a **disability** (44%)*

The proportion earning less is also higher for those who identify as Indigenous (49%) and those who have a disability (44%) – groups that were also among the most likely to have lost employment or hours of work. It is also higher among those who identify as South Asian (42%).

The likelihood of earning less was also slightly higher for those without a postsecondary education (40%) compared to those with trades or apprenticeship training or a college diploma (31%) and those with a university degree (33%). However, it is again worth distinguishing between the experiences of the older and younger members of this age group. For those between the ages of 18 and 24, which includes the most recent graduates, having a university degree did not reduce the likelihood of earning less – in fact, in this age group, university graduates were more likely than those without a postsecondary education to have experienced a loss of earnings. For those between the ages of 25 and 34, however, the advantage of having a postsecondary education and especially a university degree are much more apparent: university graduates in this age group are 16 points less likely to have lost earnings than their counterparts who did not continue their formal education past high school.



# Education and Skills Training during the Pandemic

The pandemic disrupted the education and training plans of many younger Canadians. Three groups stand out as being especially likely to have stopped or postponed their postsecondary education or skills training due to the pandemic: those who identify as Indigenous, persons with a disability, and those who identify as Black. However, during the pandemic, younger workers remained more likely than older workers to access employer-delivered training at work. For one in two younger workers who participated in job-related skills training since the spring of 2020, this training was related to the changes in the workplace caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic caused disruption not only to the labour market, but to education as well. Across the country, most postsecondary education institutions closed their campuses and continued instruction online. While many students continued with this format, others may have decided to put their education plans on hold. At the same time, with workplaces closed as well, some young workers may have decided it would be better to leave the labour market and pursue more education, despite the online format of instruction. Of particular concern is the

proportion of youth (i.e., between the ages of 18 and 24) who, during the pandemic, were engaged in neither of these two main activities, namely work or education. This situation is typically referred to as “NEET” – not employed or in education or training.

## Neither working nor in education

The Survey on Employment and Skills does show that, over the course of 2020, there was an increase in the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds that is neither working nor in education. This proportion increased by five points (from 7.6% to 12.6%) between March and December of 2020. By June 2021, however, the proportion had dropped to 6.5%. This reflects the fact that, by this time, the economy had begun to re-open (including opportunities for summer employment), rather than a recovery of the proportion in education.<sup>10</sup> These changes were greater for those age 21 to 24, compared to those age 18 to 20; for 21- to 24-year-olds, the proportion neither working nor in education almost doubled from 7.3 percent to 14.1 percent between March and December of 2020, before dropping to 6.3 percent by June 2021.<sup>11</sup>

10 This is corroborated by Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey, which reports a significant increase in youth employment rates between December 2020 and June 2021 (using data unadjusted for seasonality). See: Statistics Canada. (2021). *Labour force characteristics by sex and detailed age group, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality (x 1,000)* [Table 14-10-0017-01]. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410001701>

11 Those who are neither working nor in education are those who are unemployed, regardless of whether they are actively seeking work. This category does not include those who indicate they are homemakers or retired or who do not provide an answer regarding their main activity.

The recent drop in the proportion of youth who are NEET is encouraging, as it suggests that the rise in the proportion that is neither working nor in education is only a temporary effect of the economic shutdowns at the height of the pandemic. But further research is required as the pandemic subsides to confirm that this will in fact be the case, as the possibility remains that some of those affected by the pandemic will find it difficult to find their way back to work or school. Those who do return to work may still experience lasting setbacks (such as lower earnings) as a result of starting their careers during the recession that accompanied the pandemic.<sup>12</sup> This is especially concerning for workers from disadvantaged backgrounds, as previous research suggests they may be disproportionately impacted by the after-effects of economic downturns.<sup>13</sup>



*The pandemic caused disruption **not only to the labour market, but to education as well.** Across the country, most postsecondary education institutions closed their campuses and continued instruction online.*

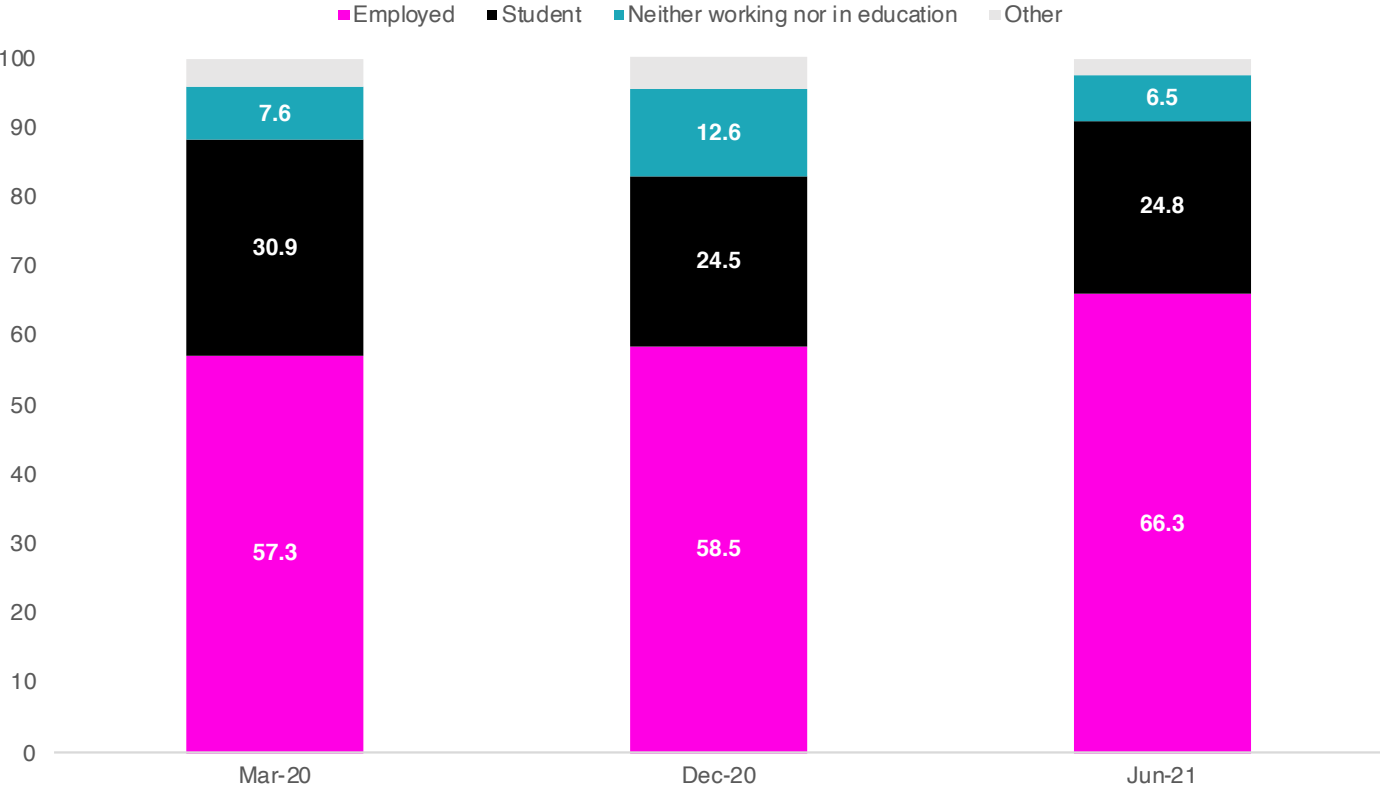
12 Frenette, M., Handler, T. & Messacar, D. (2020). *Potential earnings losses among high school and postsecondary graduates due to the COVID-19 economic downturn*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-626-x/11-626-x2020012-eng.htm>

13 See Schwandt, H. and Von Wachter, T. (2019). Unlucky cohorts: Estimating the long-term effects of entering the labor market in a recession in large cross-sectional data sets. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 37(S1), S161–S198. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/701046>; and Escalonilla, M., Cueto, B. & Perez Villadóniga, M.J. (2021). Long-term effects on youth career of entering the labour market during the Great Recession. *Applied Economics*, 1–15. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00036846.2021.1927966>

# Employed, in education or unemployed

Subsample: between the ages of 18 and 24

## Ages 18 to 24

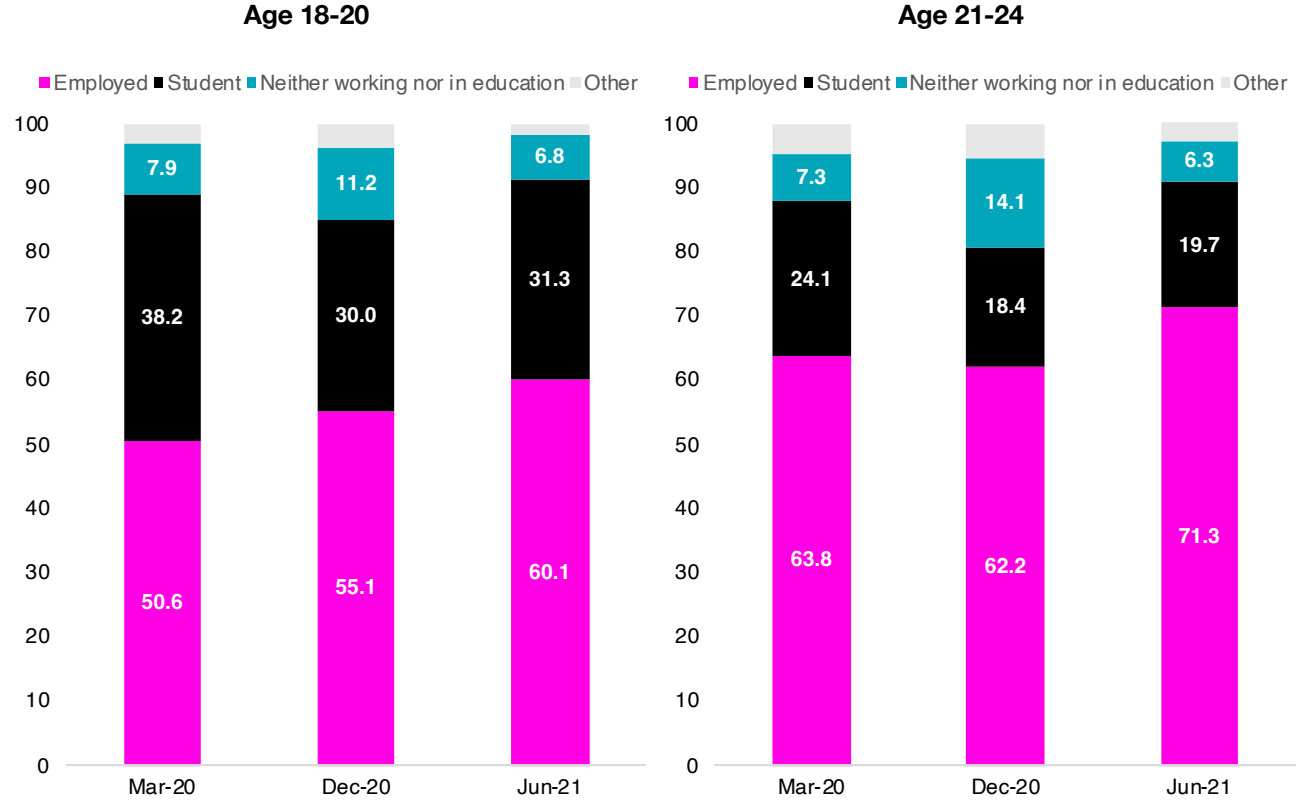


Q.12 Which of the following best describes your current employment situation?

(Note: "other" includes homemaker, retired and cannot say.)

# Employed, in education or unemployed

By age group



Q.12 Which of the following best describes your current employment situation?  
 (Note: "other" includes homemaker, retired and cannot say.)

It is not possible to compare changes over time for specific groups of youth due to the different structures of the earlier survey samples. However, the June 2021 survey allows for closer examination of the situation of different groups within the wider 18- to 34-year-old age cohort. For this group overall, in June 2021, 9 percent were neither working nor in education. This figure is higher than average for:

- > Young adults who identify as First Nations (16.3%);
- > those without a postsecondary education (13.8%);
- > those born in Canada to Canadian-born parents (11.4%);
- > those who identify as white (10.7%).

Conversely, the figure is lower than average for:

- > young adults who identify as South Asian (8.5%);
- > young adults who identify as Black (7.0%);
- > young adults who are first-generation (6.3%) or second-generation (6.5%) immigrants;
- > those with trades or apprenticeship training or a college diploma (5.6%);
- > those with a university degree (5.0%);
- > young adults who identify as Chinese (2.2%).

## Starting or stopping postsecondary education

A significant proportion of Canadian young adults changed their plans for postsecondary education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, while for some young adults this meant discontinuing or postponing their studies, for others it meant returning to the classroom.

Among those age 18 to 34:<sup>14</sup>

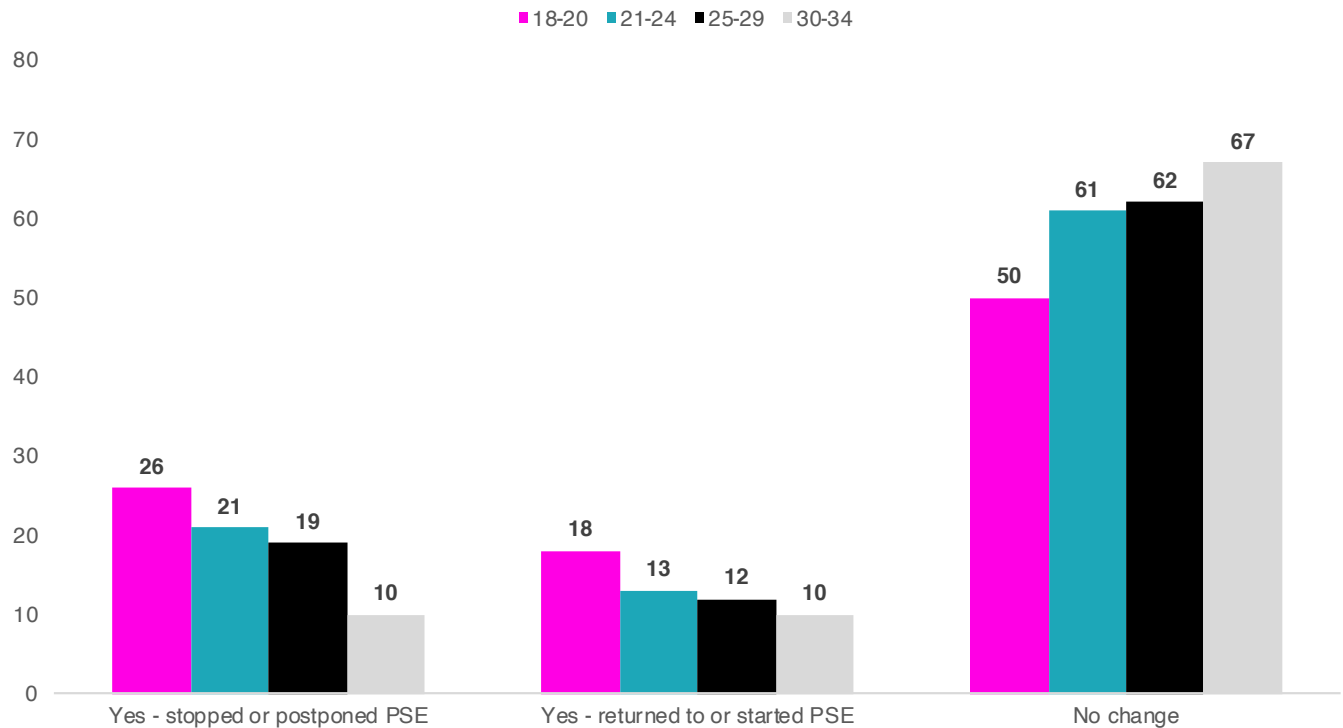
- > 19 percent stopped or postponed their postsecondary studies as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- > 13 percent started or returned to their postsecondary studies as a result of the pandemic;
- > 60 percent did not change their plans regarding postsecondary education;
- > 8 percent did not select any of these options.

The proportion that changed their plans either way as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is much larger among the youngest age cohorts. Among those age 18 to 20, for instance, one in four (26%) stopped or postponed their postsecondary studies, while just under one in five (18%) started or returned to their postsecondary studies. The proportion that changed their plans is also higher among those who do not yet hold a postsecondary credential (many of whom would be recent high school graduates who have not yet had the time to complete further studies). In this case, 22 percent stopped or postponed their postsecondary studies, while 14 percent started or returned.

14 This question was only asked to those in this age group.

## Change of plans for postsecondary education

By age group



Q.26a Have you changed your plans for postsecondary education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Because the proportion that stopped or postponed their studies is only slightly larger than the proportion that returned to or started their studies, the net effect of the pandemic on overall postsecondary enrolment may have been modest.<sup>15</sup> But the results point to a significant amount of disruption to the lives of young adults in Canada, especially for those under the age of 24.

15 These figures also do not account for the decisions of those under the age of 18 at the time of the survey.

**TABLE 2**

Change of plans for postsecondary education (age 18 to 34 only)

<b>Q26a: Have you changed your plans for postsecondary education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?</b>				
<b>Population group</b>	<b>Stopped or postponed their postsecondary studies</b>	<b>Started or returned to their</b>	<b>No change</b>	<b>Cannot say</b>
Indigenous Peoples	39	17	36	9
Persons with disabilities*	32	19	44	5
Black	29	24	38	9
No postsecondary education	22	14	53	11
South Asian	22	12	57	9
Men	20	14	56	10
Average	19	13	60	8
Women	18	12	64	7
Immigrant (first generation)	17	15	59	10
White	15	11	66	8
Chinese	10	12	73	5

\* Answered yes to the question, "Have limits on the amount of daily activity".

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Among those asked this question (all of whom were between the ages of 18 and 34), three groups stand out as being much more likely than average to have stopped or postponed their postsecondary education due to the pandemic: young adults who identify as Indigenous (39%) (and especially First Nations); young adults with a disability (32%); and young adults who identify as Black (29%). Those in each of these groups, however, are also somewhat more likely to have started or returned to postsecondary education (perhaps because of disruptions to their work situation), and are much less likely to have made no change to their plans.

## Starting or stopping skills training

The pandemic had the potential to interfere with plans, not only for education, but also for skills training. In fact, one in four Canadians changed their plans to improve their job-related skills as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Again, however, this includes some who discontinued or postponed their training, and others who started new training as a result of the pandemic.

Overall, excluding those who are retired, who are caring for their families or who are students:

- > 13 percent stopped or postponed their job-related skills training as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- > 12 percent started some new job-related skills training;

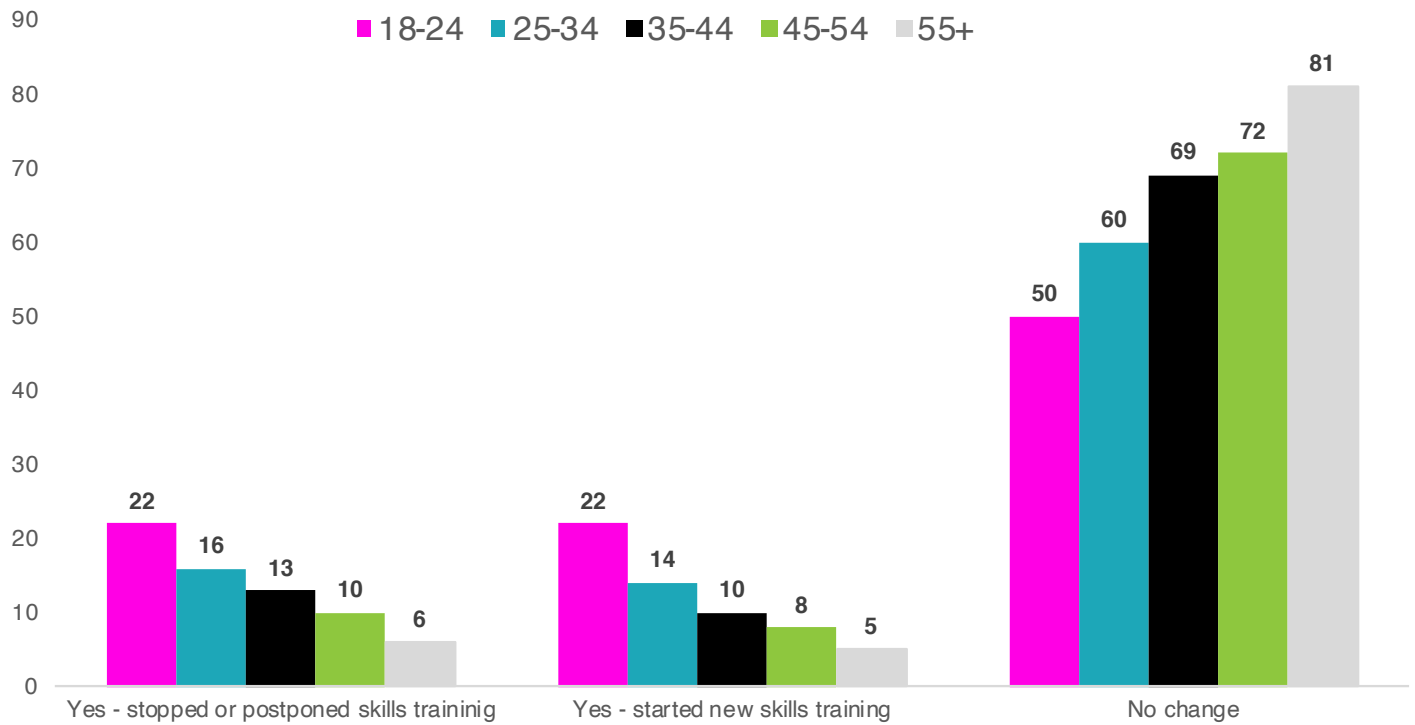
- > 67 percent did not change their plans regarding job-related skills training;
- > 9 percent did not select any of these options.

Younger Canadians, particularly those under the age of 24, were more likely than their older counterparts to both stop or postpone skills training or to start new training as a result of the pandemic (they are less likely to have had no change in plans). Among those age 18 to 24, 22 percent stopped or postponed their job-related skills training, and the same proportion (22%) started some new job-related skills training.



## Change of plans for job-related skills training

By age group



Q.26b Have you changed your plans for training to improve your job-related skills as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Looking at the larger group of those between the ages of 18 and 34, there are a number of important variations in experiences related to skills training. Overall, in this age group, 19 percent stopped or postponed their job-related skills training, and 18 percent started some new job-related skills training. These figures are more or less the same for those in this age group who are employed on a full-time or part-time basis, or who are self-employed. However, while the likelihood of stopping or postponing job-related skills training is close to average (20%) among those who are unemployed (whether or not they are actively seeking work), the likelihood of starting new job-related skills training is much lower among this group (7%). Similarly, the likelihood of stopping or postponing job-related skills training

is higher among those in this age group who had their hours of work reduced as a result of the pandemic (28% of those who lost hours of work stopped or postponed job-related skills training as a result of the pandemic, compared to 15% who did not).

These results suggest that the negative impact of the pandemic on skills training has been felt not just by young adults in general, but specifically by young adults who have had most difficulty securing employment or whose work was interfered with by the pandemic. It also suggests that the workplace is itself an important access point for skills training, which compounds the challenges facing those who have been unable to secure stable employment.



**TABLE 3**

Change of plans for job-related skills training (age 18 to 34 only)

<b>Q26b: Have you changed your plans for training to improve your job-related skills as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?</b>				
<b>Population group</b>	<b>Stopped or postponed skills training</b>	<b>Started new skills training</b>	<b>No change</b>	<b>Cannot say</b>
Indigenous Peoples	38	24	37	2
Persons with disabilities*	30	27	37	6
Black	29	29	37	5
No postsecondary education	25	15	49	10
South Asian	23	25	44	8
Men	21	20	52	8
Average	19	18	55	8
Immigrant (first generation)	19	15	56	10
Women	17	15	59	8
White	16	15	61	8
Chinese	12	21	65	3

\* Answered yes to the question, "Have limits on the amount of daily activity".

Among those age 18 to 34, the likelihood of stopping or postponing skills training as a result of the pandemic is highest among the same groups that were also more likely to stop or postpone their postsecondary education: those who identify as Indigenous (38%), persons with a disability (30%), those who identify as Black (29%), and those without a postsecondary credential (25%).

## Participation in skills training

### **PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING DURING THE PANDEMIC**

While the pandemic disrupted the plans of many younger Canadians regarding education or training, they remain more likely than older workers to access employer-delivered training at work.

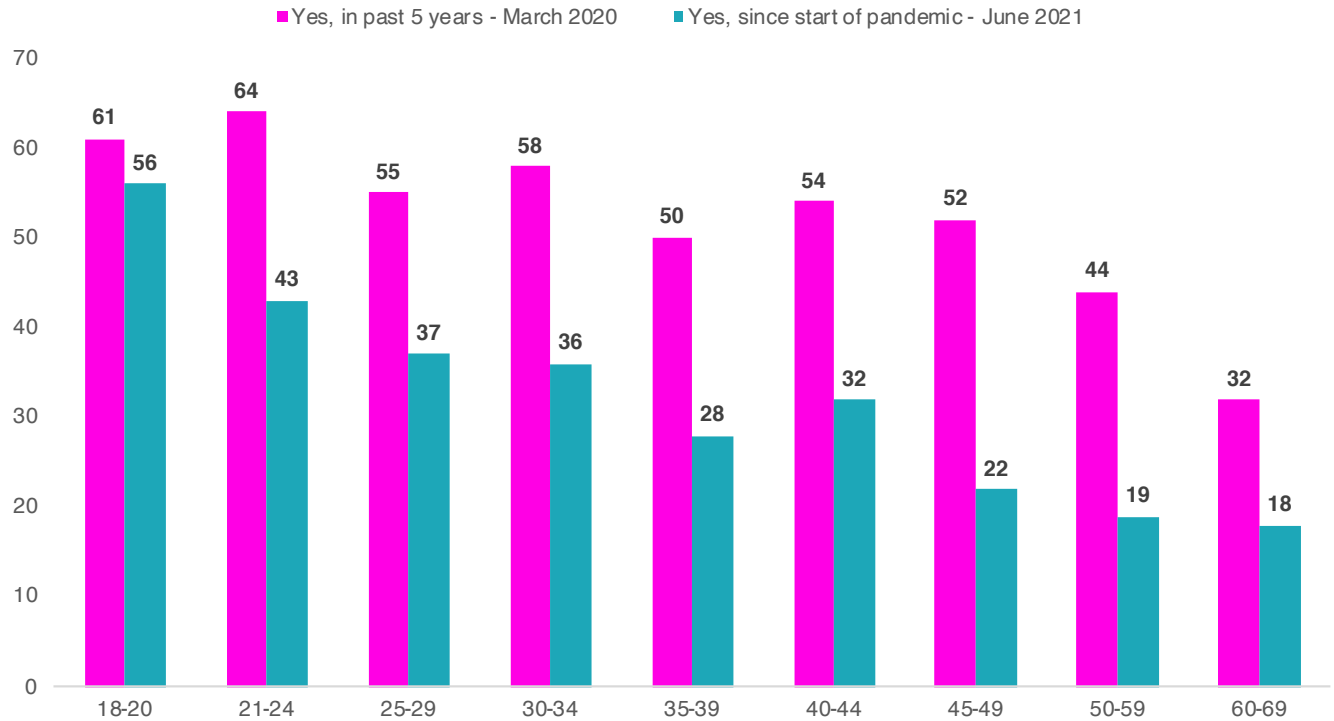
Wave 1 of the Survey on Employment and Skills, conducted in March 2020, showed that the likelihood of participating in a training course to improve work-related skills that was provided by an employer declined as age increased: it was highest for those between the ages of 18 and 24, somewhat lower for those between the ages of 25 and 49, and lowest for those over the age of 50.

The most recent survey, conducted in June 2021, shows that this pattern still holds. As the question now asks about participation in training during the pandemic, and not in the past five years, the overall participation rate is lower. But it remains the case that workers age 18 to 24 are the most likely to have participated, while those over the age of 50 are the least.

## Participation in a training course that was provided by your employer

By age group

Subsample: those in the labour force



Q.35a Since the start of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, have you participated in any of the following forms of work-related training to improve your skills? A training course that was provided by your employer

The pattern is somewhat similar when it comes to more self-directed training for workers, although in this case the differences among age groups are not as large. In both March 2020 and June 2021, those age 25 to 34 (rather than the youngest workers age 18 to 24) were most likely to say they had taken a training course that was not provided by their employer, but that they took while they were working. In both surveys, workers age 55 and older were the least likely to take this kind of training.

Looking at the most recent survey that took place in June 2021, the following patterns emerge among those age 18 to 34:<sup>16</sup>

> Overall, since the start of the pandemic, 42 percent of workers in this age group have participated in a training course to improve their skills that was provided by their employer, and 23 percent participated in training course that was not provided by their employer, but that they took while they were working. Forty-seven percent took at least one of these forms of training.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that some forms of work-related skills training continued to be available despite the onset of the pandemic.<sup>18</sup>

> Employer-provided skills training is more common for those employed either full-time (49%) or part-time (39%) and much less common for those who are self-employed (25%) or unemployed and looking for work (25%).<sup>19</sup> Training not provided by an employer is most common for those who are self-employed (38%) compared to those employed full-time (25%) or part-time (18%), and less common for those who are unemployed and looking for work (8%).

> Employer-provided skills training is slightly less common for those working in occupations related to trades, transportation or manual labour (40%), and more common for those working in office or clerical positions (47%) or who are employed as professionals or executives (47%). This is also the case for training not provided by an employer.

> Employer-provided skills training is much more common for those working in the public sector (58%) compared to the private sector (38%), and for union members (55%) compared to non-members (39%). The same is true of training not provided by the employer but taken while working.

16 When comparing results between the June 2021 and March 2020 surveys, the June 2021 sample excludes those who are unemployed but not looking for work, to match the March 2020 subsample. When looking in more detail at the results from June 2021 for those age 18 to 34, the total sample includes those who are unemployed but not looking for work. However, the sample size for those who are unemployed but not looking for work within this age group (62) is too small for results to be reported separately.

17 14 percent report participating in both of these forms of training.

18 As will be noted, this is partly because the training provided had to do with managing the impact of the pandemic on work and the workplace.

19 It is possible that those who were unemployed at the time of the survey may have been employed at the time they undertook this training.

- > Both types of training are slightly more common for those with a postsecondary education and for those with higher household incomes, but the differences by education and income within this age group (age 18 to 34) are much less pronounced than for those age 35 to 54. This suggests that at earlier stages of workers' careers, training is made available partly on the basis of age – that is, as part of the process of bringing younger workers on board. As workers age, other factors become more important, and divisions take hold whereby those in more skills-intensive or well-paid positions become more likely than others to access opportunities to further improve their skills.<sup>20</sup>
- > For those age 18 to 34, employer-provided skills training is more common for Indigenous workers (63%) compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts (40%), and for workers who identify as South Asian (58%) or Black (58%) compared to those who identify as Chinese (39%) or white (34%). It is also more common for persons with a disability (53%), compared to those without (34%). It is slightly more common for first (44%) and second (46%) generation immigrants, compared to those

born in Canada to Canadian-born parents (38%). There is a small difference between men (39%) and women (44%). These same patterns generally hold in the case of skills training not provided by an employer, though in this case, the differences between the experiences of different groups are not as large.

It is also notable that participation in skills training was more, not less, common for those who had shifted to working from home during the pandemic. Among those in age 18 to 34 who switched to working from home, 53 percent participated in employer-provided skills training during the pandemic, compared to 41 percent of those who continued to work from their usual workplace outside the home. In the case of skills training not provided by the employer, the figures are 36 percent and 18 percent, respectively. Thus, working from home in and of itself does not appear to have been a barrier to accessing skills training during the pandemic.

20 This question, however, refers specifically to training taken since the start of the pandemic. In the March 2020 survey, which asked about training taken over the past five years, this pattern is not as evident.

**TABLE 4****Participation during the pandemic in job-related training to improve skills**

Subsample: those age 18 to 34 who are employed or unemployed

<b>Q35. Since the start of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, have you participated in any of the following forms of work-related training to improve your skills? (% yes)</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Population group</b>	<b>A training course that was provided by your employer</b>	<b>A training course that was not provided by your employer, but that you took while you were working</b>
Average	Average	42	23
Employment status	Employed full-time	49	25
	Employed part-time	39	18
	Self-employed	25	38
	Unemployed <sup>21</sup>	25	8
Occupation	Office/clerical	47	31
	Sales & services	43	19
	Trades, transportation or manual labour	40	17
	Professional or executive	47	28
Educational attainment	High school or less	40	23
	Trades, apprenticeship or college	40	21
	University	46	24
Indigenous identity	Indigenous	63	37
	Non-Indigenous	40	22



Racial or cultural identity	Non-racialized (white)	34	21
	South Asian	58	25
	Black	58	18
	Chinese	39	26
Disability	Has limits	53	32
	Does not have limits	34	17
Generation in Canada	First generation	44	24
	Second generation	46	26
	Third generation plus	38	21
Employment sector	Public sector	58	32
	Private sector	38	21
	Not-for-profit sector	56	27
Union membership	Member	55	37
	Non-member	39	21

21 In this case, this includes only those who are unemployed and looking for work.

## **PURPOSE OF TRAINING DURING THE PANDEMIC**

Among many of those age 18 to 34, the training they received during the pandemic was also related to the pandemic. One in two (49%) of those who participated in job-related skills training during the pandemic say that this training was related to the changes in the workplace caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; 48 percent say it was not related to the pandemic, and 3 percent do not say either way (this figure is slightly higher (52%) in the case of those whose training was provided by their employer). Among those who say their training was related to the pandemic, 68 percent specify that it was related to how to keep safe from the COVID-19 virus, 43 percent say that it was related to how to manage working from home (this figure is higher (50%) for those who switched to working from home at least some days during the pandemic), and 29 percent say it was related to some other change in the workplace caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is notable that there is a connection between these training experiences, on the one hand, and satisfaction with one's job and employer, on the other hand. Those who participated in employer-provided training during the pandemic, as well as those whose

training was related to the changes in the workplace caused by pandemic, are more likely than those who did not participate in these forms of training to be very satisfied with their jobs, and to say that their employer has been very helpful in terms of managing the changes to their work situation caused by the pandemic.<sup>22</sup>

## **TRAINING WHILE WITHOUT WORK DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Finally, the June 2021 survey shows that younger workers were also more likely than their older counterparts to take a work-related skills training course because they became unemployed or were working fewer hours because of the COVID-19 pandemic – although this form of training is less common than training provided by an employer. A little more than one in five (22%) workers age 18 to 34 opted for this form of training during the pandemic – twice as many as among those age 35 to 54 (10%). Participation was even more common among those age 18 to 24 (27%), compared to those age 25 to 34 (18%). Among those age 18 to 34 who specifically reported losing hours of work or becoming unemployed as a result of the pandemic, 31 percent undertook a work-related skills training course for this reason.

<sup>22</sup> This does not mean necessarily that the training experiences directly caused greater satisfaction, as it may be driven by other factors.

# Health and Well-Being

**Younger Canadians are less likely than their older counterparts to rate their mental health as excellent or very good. The situation of younger women remains the most alarming: only one in four women between the ages of 18 and 34 rate their mental health as excellent or good. Over the past 18 months, however, there has been remarkable stability in the hopefulness and self-confidence of younger Canadians, even though those in this age group experienced significant disruption at work and in education due to the pandemic.**

The potential impacts of the pandemic on younger Canadians go well beyond experiences directly related to education and employment. The restrictions and uncertainties resulting from prolonged shutdowns may have taken their toll on overall well-being as well. While good physical and mental health are important in and of themselves, they also have implications for the workplace. For both employees and employers, poor health

can be expected to pose an obstacle to a post-pandemic recovery. Workers facing health challenges may be less likely to return to work when the economy re-opens or less well-equipped to adapt to changes in workplace culture and practices that the pandemic may have instigated or accelerated.

## Physical and mental health

The second wave of the Survey on Employment and Skills, conducted in December 2020, reported that Canadians' assessments of their physical health and, more notably, their mental health had become worse during the pandemic. In the case of mental health, the extent of the negative change was greater for older age groups than for younger ones; however, it remained the case that younger Canadians were less likely than their older counterparts to rate their mental health as excellent or very good.<sup>23</sup>

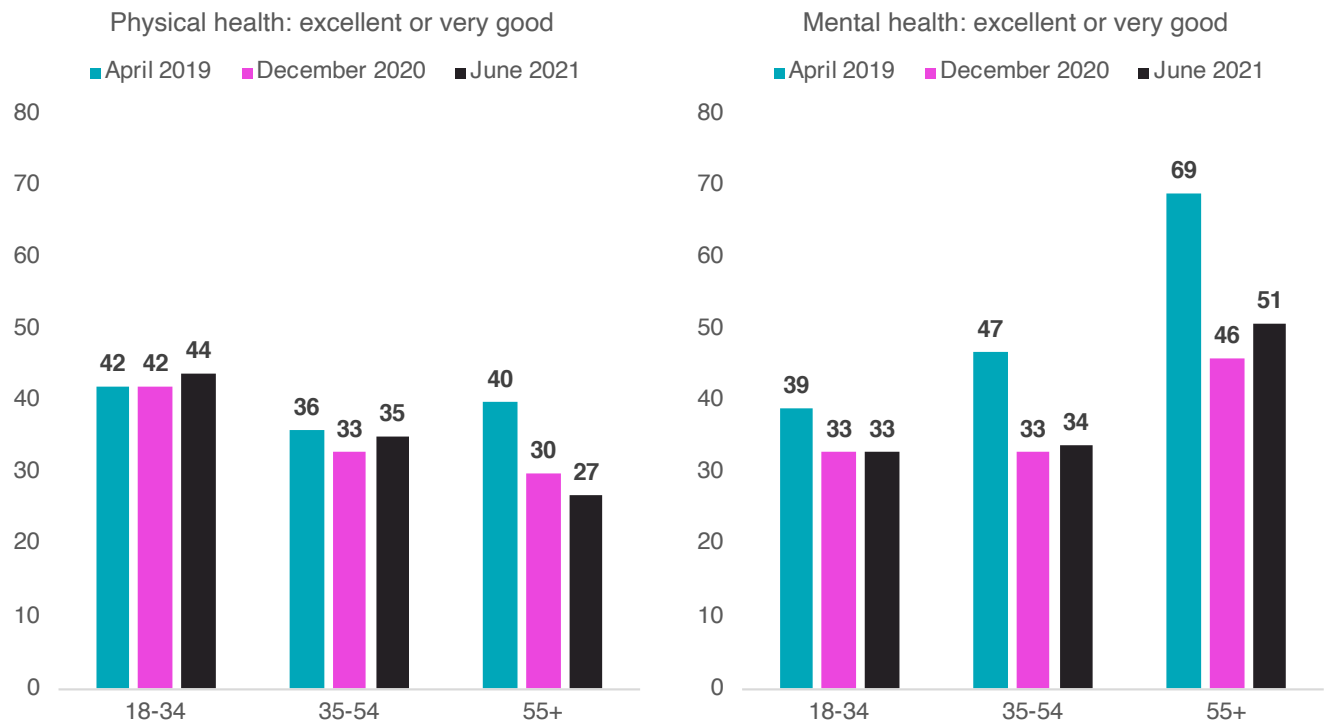
The most recent survey, conducted in June 2021, shows little change from December 2020. Overall, in June 2021, 35 percent of Canadians rated their physical health as excellent or very good, compared to 34 percent in December. In the case of mental health, the corresponding figures are 40 percent and 38 percent.

23 Environics Institute for Survey Research, Future Skills Centre, & Diversity Institute. (2021). *Mind and body: Impact of the pandemic on physical and mental health*. <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/mind-and-body-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-physical-and-mental-health>

# Change in perceptions of physical and mental health

By age group

April 2019 - June 2021 | Data for April 2019 is from the Race Relations in Canada 2019 Survey (EnviroNics Institute).



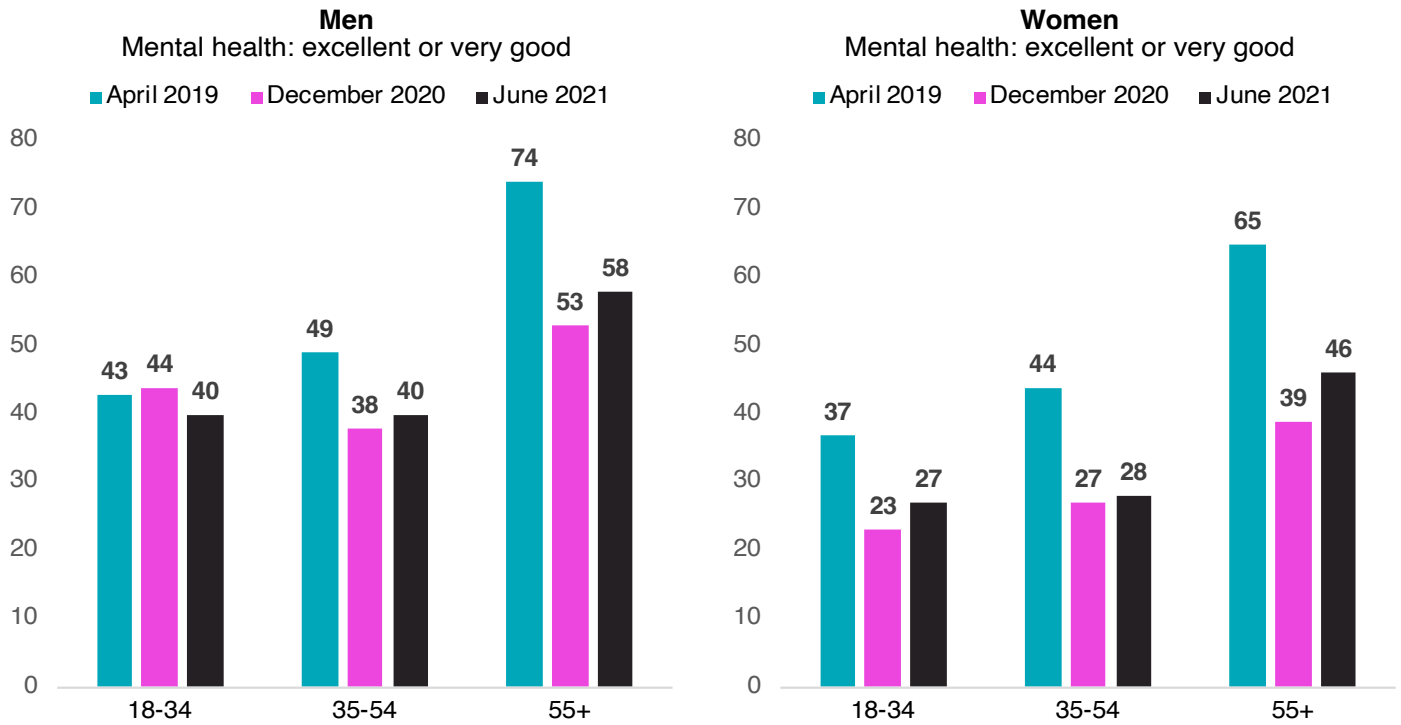
Q10a. In general, would you say your physical health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Q10b. In general, would you say your mental health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

# Change in perceptions of mental health

By age group and gender

April 2019 - June 2021 | Data for April 2019 is from the Race Relations in Canada 2019 Survey (EnviroNics Institute).

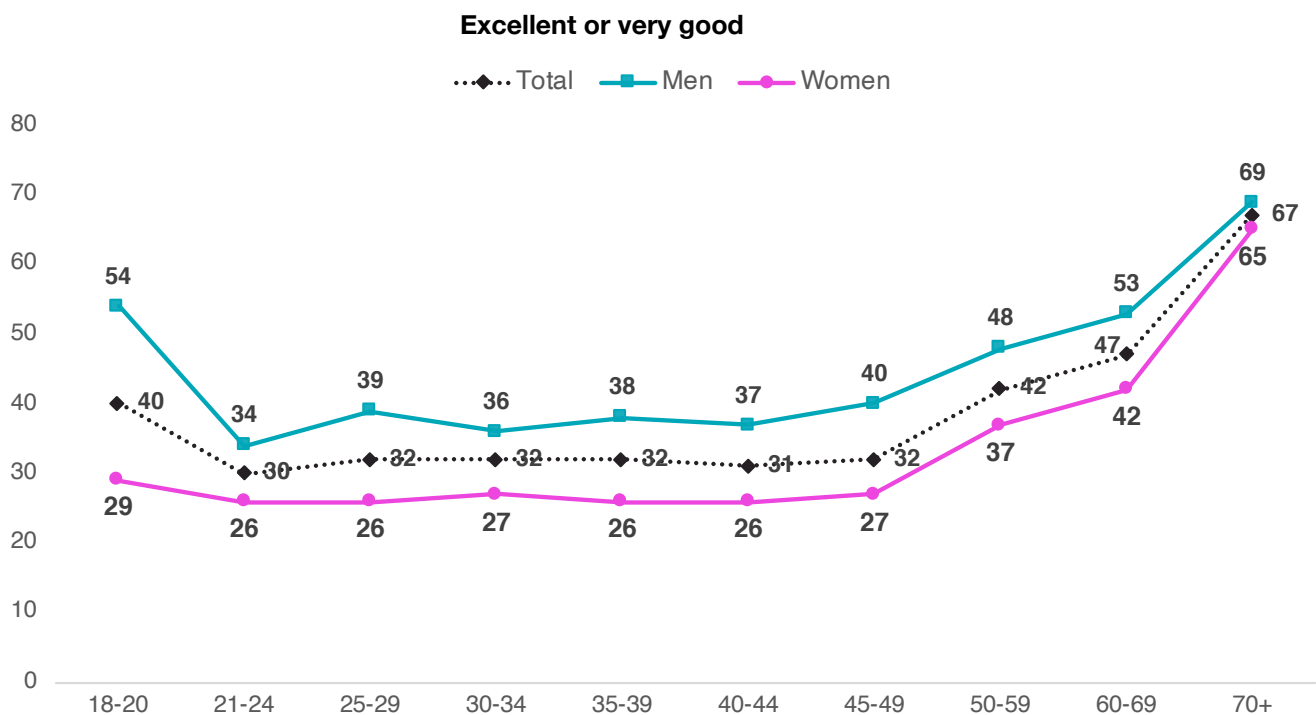


Q10b. In general, would you say your mental health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

In June 2021, it remained the case that younger Canadians were more likely than their older counterparts to rate their physical health as excellent or very good, but less likely to do so in the case of mental health. As was the case in December 2020, the mental health of younger women continues to be the most alarming: the June 2021 survey shows that only 27 percent of women between the ages of 18 and 34 rate their mental health as excellent or good, compared to 40 percent of men in that age group. Conversely, 44 percent of women age 18 to 34 rate their mental health as fair or poor, compared to 31 percent of men in that age group.

## Perceptions of mental health

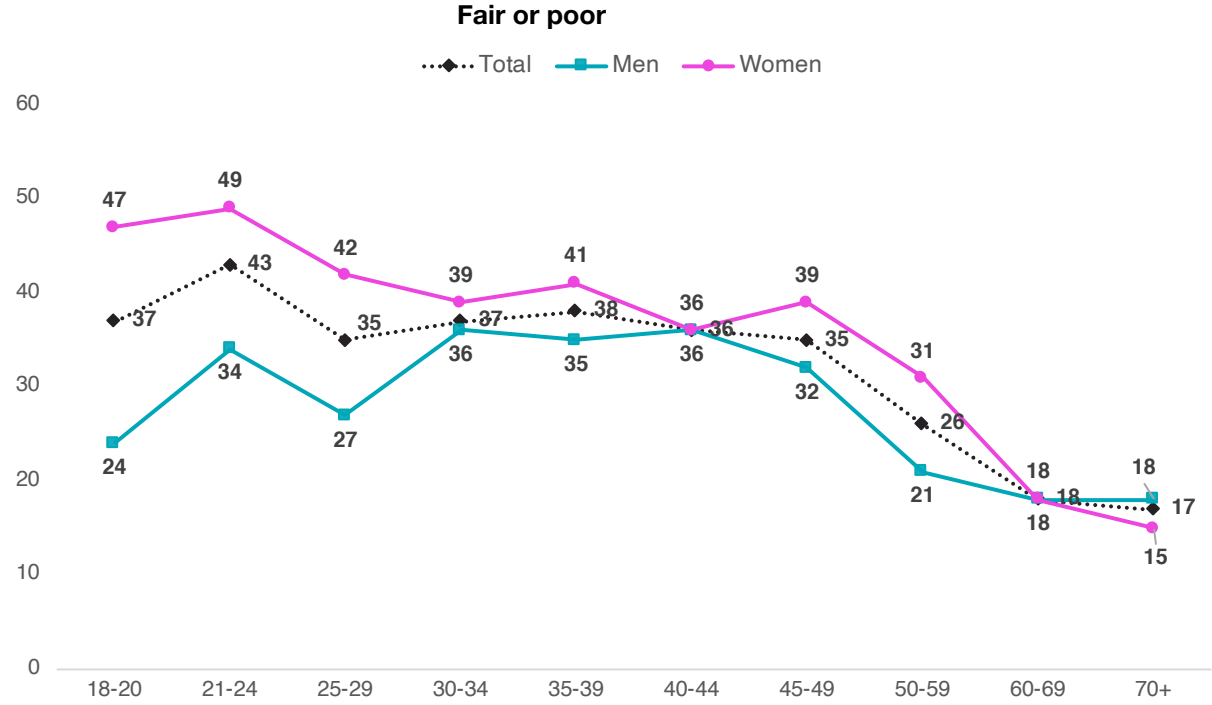
By age group and gender



Q10b. In general, would you say your mental health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

# Change in perceptions of mental health

By age group and gender



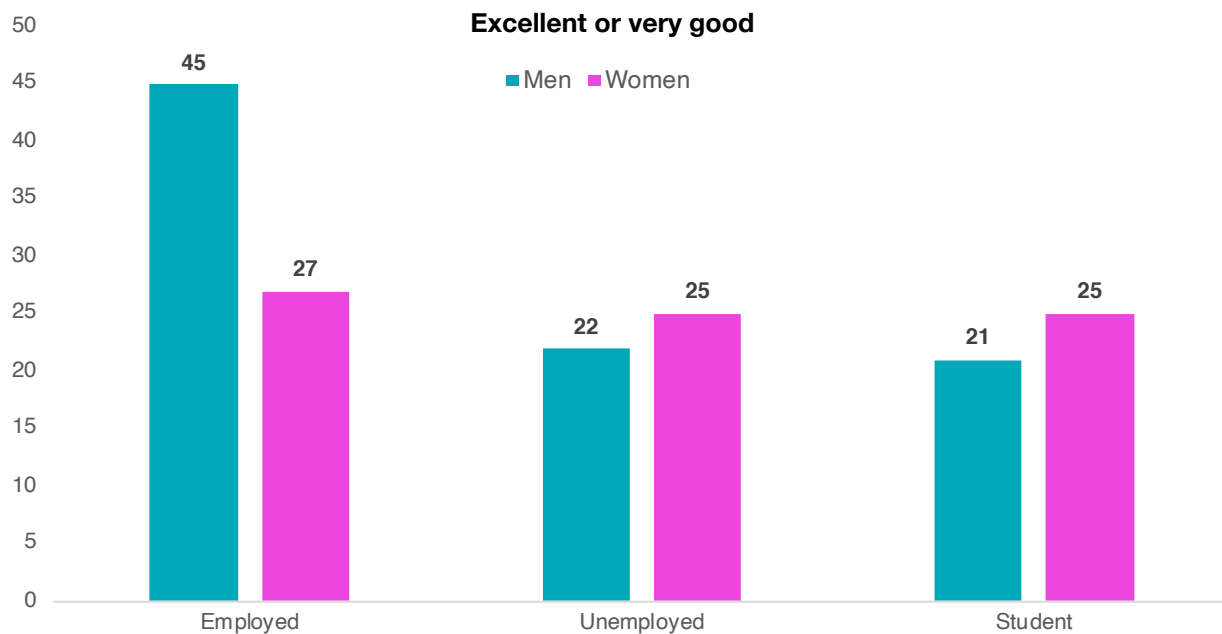
Q10b. In general, would you say your mental health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Overall, within the 18- to 34-year-old age group, those who are employed (36%) are more likely than those who are unemployed (23%) or who are students (25%) to rate their mental health as excellent or very good. However, this pattern in fact only holds for men in this age group, and not for women. While employed men are more likely than average to rate their mental health as excellent or good (45%), this is not the case for employed women (27%). In short, employment does not appear to have as positive an impact on mental health in the case of young women as it does in the case of young men. The survey data cannot determine, however, if this relates in any way to the pandemic.<sup>24</sup>

## Perceptions of mental health

By employment status and gender

Subsample: those in the labour force, age 18 to 34



Q10b. In general, would you say your mental health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

<sup>24</sup> This pattern is also evident in the second wave of the Survey on Employment and Skills conducted in December 2020. The pre-pandemic April 2019 Race Relations in Canada survey was not designed to provide detailed information about employment status.



Previous surveys have shown that those who identify as South Asian or Black report better mental health than those who identify as Indigenous, white or Chinese.<sup>25</sup> The most recent survey, conducted in June 2021, confirms this pattern. Looking specifically at those age 18 to 34, the proportion reporting excellent or very good mental health is highest among those who identify as Indigenous (56%), Black (52%) or South Asian (39%) and lower for those who identify as Chinese (31%) or white (30%).

## Resilience

As mentioned, younger Canadians have a less positive outlook on their mental health than those in older age groups, but at the same time, they have experienced less change in outlook during the pandemic than older Canadians. There has also been little change in a number of other measures related to younger Canadians' outlook on their lives in general.

Among those age 18 to 34:

- > 56 percent always or often have a hopeful view of the future; this figure from June 2021 is very similar to that recorded in March 2020 at the start of the pandemic (53%).
- > 55 percent say they are always or often confident in their abilities, even when faced with challenges; the figure in March 2020 was 58 percent.
- > 58 percent say they are always or often able to bounce back quickly after hard times; the figure in March 2020 was 50 percent.
- > 61 percent say they always or often have people they can depend on to help them when they really need it; the figure in March 2020 was also 61 percent.

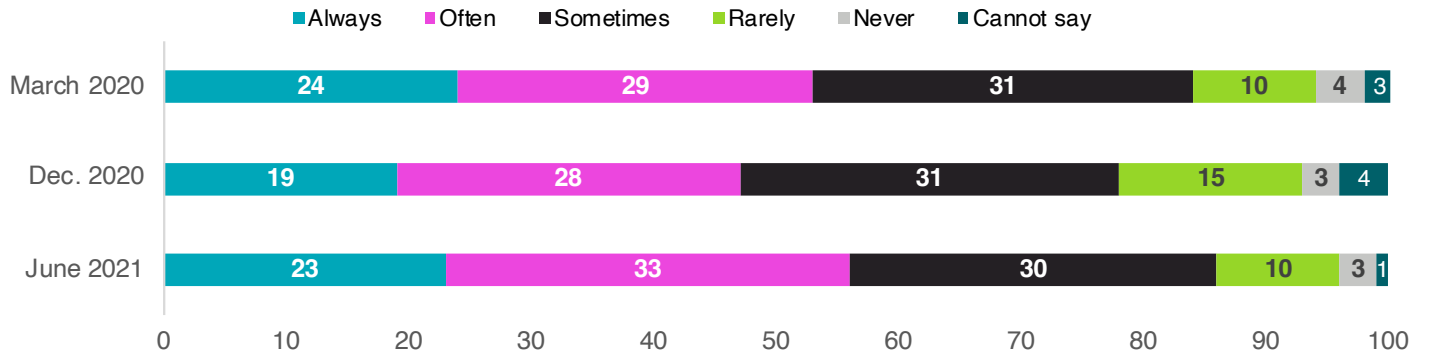
These results point to a remarkable stability in hopefulness and self-confidence, despite the fact that Canadians in this age group experienced significant disruption at work and in education due to the pandemic, as seen in the previous sections of this report.

25 Environics Institute et al., *Mind and body*, p. 6.

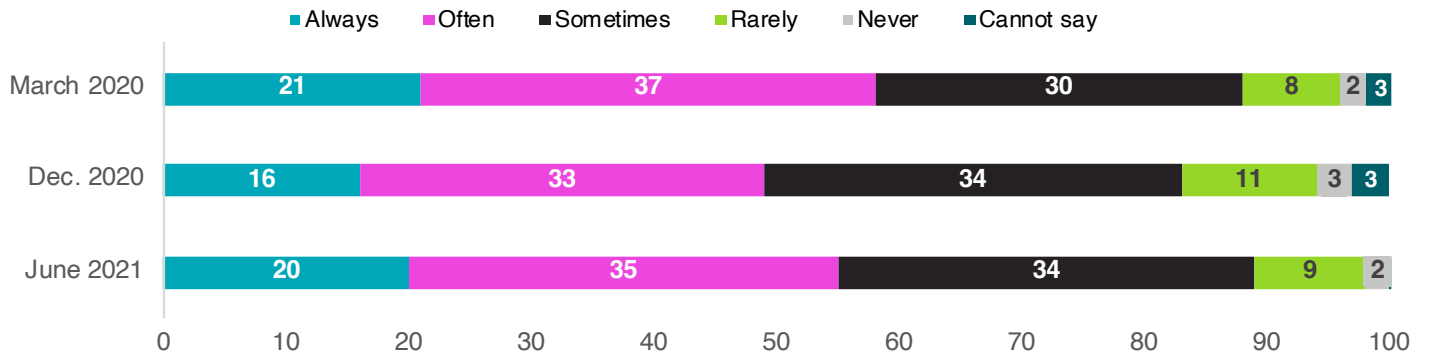
# Thinking about your life in general, how often would you say you:

Subsample: between the ages of 18 and 34

## Have a hopeful view of the future

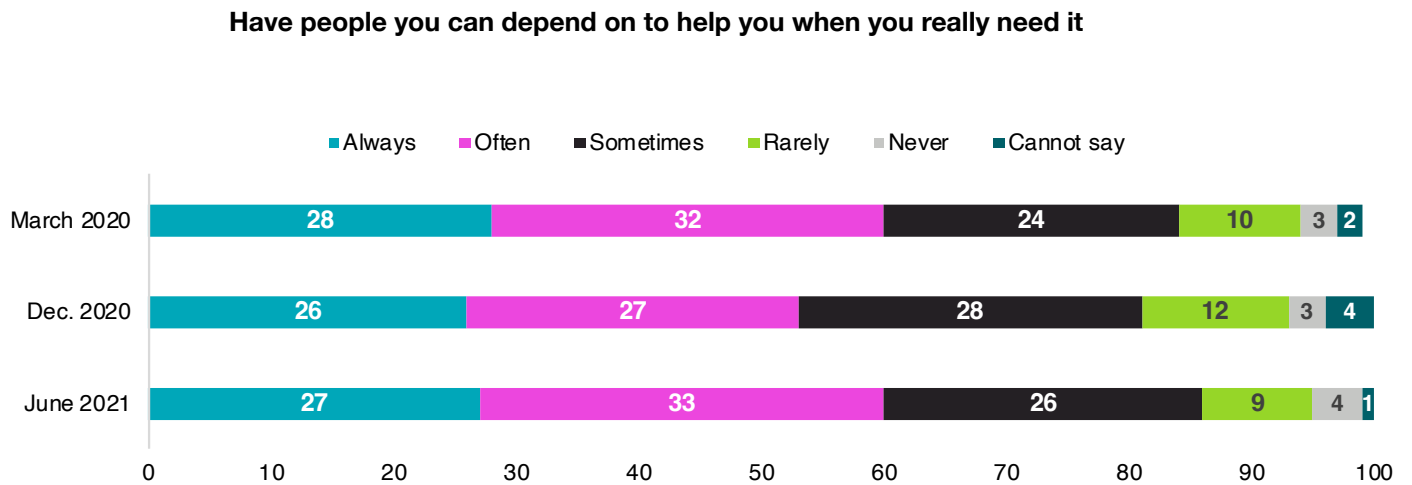
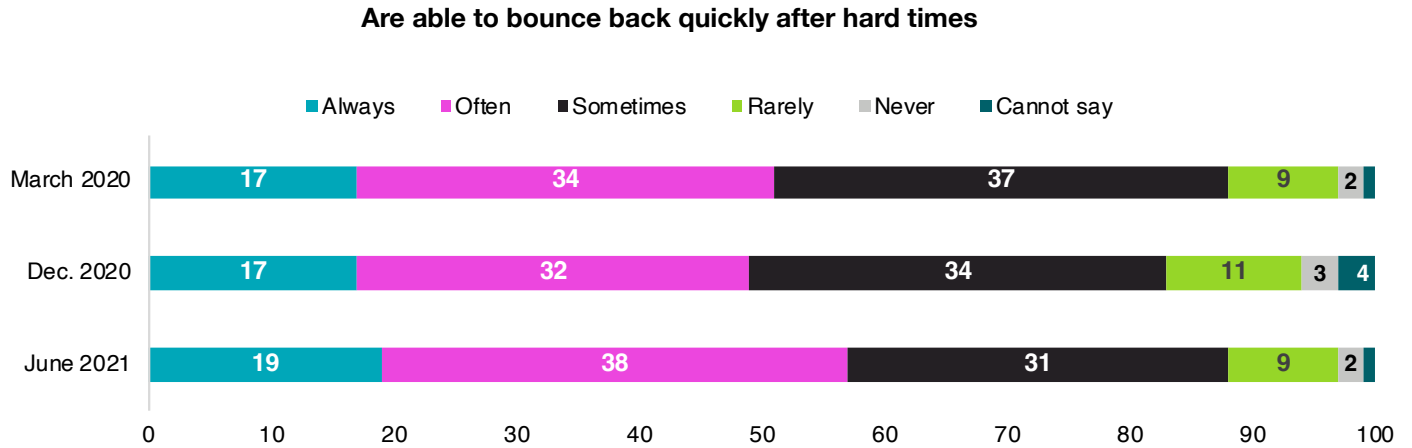


## Are confident in your abilities, even when faced with challenges



## Thinking about your life in general, how often would you say you:

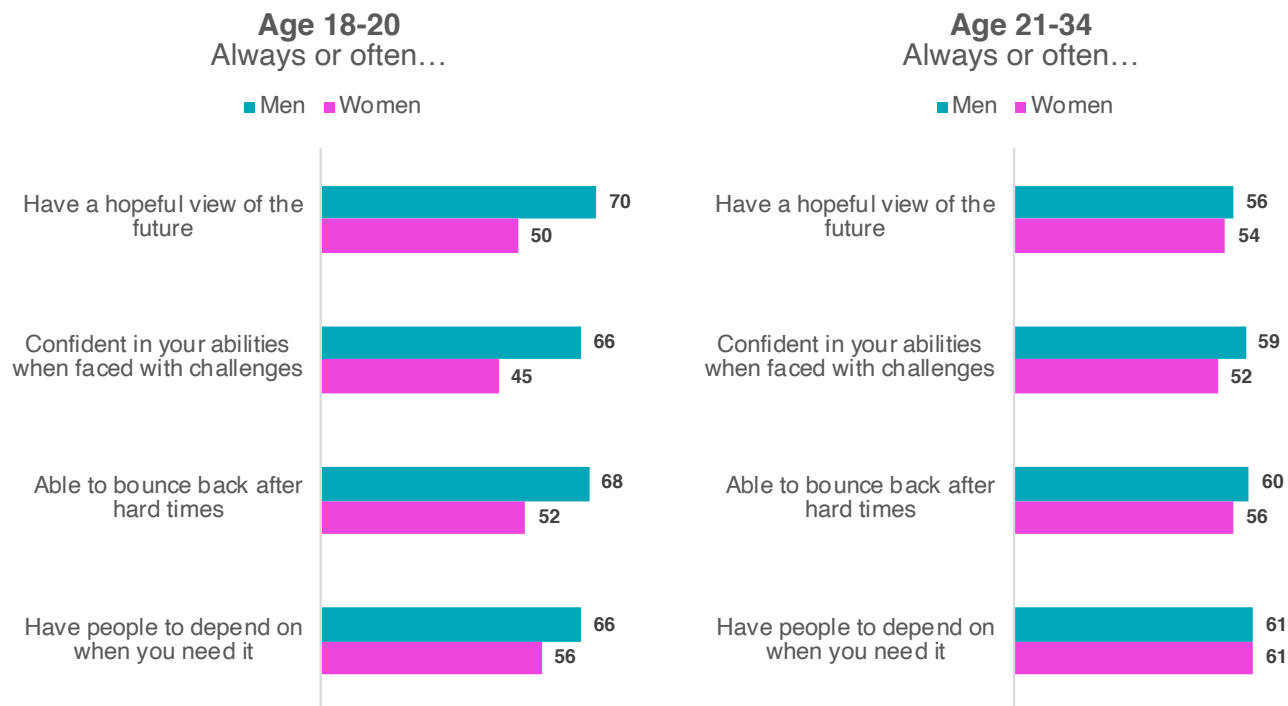
Subsample: between the ages of 18 and 34



Among those age 18 to 34 years old, there are notable differences in outlook by gender. In general, men have a somewhat more positive outlook than women. However, this overall modest gender difference among 18- to 34-year-olds is driven by much larger differences among the very youngest adults. For instance, 70 percent of men age 18 to 20 always or often have a hopeful view of the future, compared to 50 percent of women in this age group; among those age 21 to 34, men and women are more or less equally likely to hold this view. It appears that after adolescence, men become somewhat less positive in their general outlook, while women become somewhat more positive.

## Outlook on life in general

By age group and gender



Q. Thinking about your life in general, how often would you say you...

There are also some modest differences among regions, with Quebecers generally having a more positive outlook compared to those in other provinces. Young adults in the three territories, however, appear to have an even more positive outlook than Quebecers, but the sample size for young adults in the North is too small to report this finding with confidence.<sup>26</sup> Those who identify as South Asian, Black or Indigenous tend to have outlooks that are somewhat more positive than average, while the outlook of those who identify as Chinese is generally less positive. Not surprisingly, those who are currently employed, who have higher household incomes, or who did not lose their jobs as a result of the pandemic tend to have more positive outlooks on their lives in general.

<sup>26</sup> The survey includes 94 individuals in the North between the ages of 18 and 34. However, when all age groups are included, it remains the case that residents of the North are much more likely to report a positive outlook on their lives in general than are other Canadians.

# Conclusion

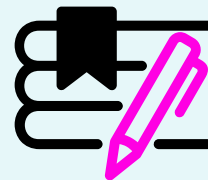
This report has highlighted the many ways in which younger Canadians have been adversely affected by the pandemic, from the loss of employment and earnings, to the disruptions to their plans for education or training, to the decline in their mental health. While Canadians in all age groups have been impacted, in many cases, negative experiences have been felt most acutely and most persistently by those under the age of 35, particularly those under the age of 24. This includes young adults who have recently completed their postsecondary education.

Access to education and training remains a particular issue of concern. The pandemic initially led to an increase in the proportion of youth who are neither employed nor pursuing their education. While the economic shutdowns prompted some young Canadians to start or return to postsecondary education, more postponed or discontinued their studies. And while older postsecondary graduates were more insulated from economic disruption, this was not the case for the most recent postsecondary graduates.

A more positive finding is that young workers continue to be more likely than their older counterparts to participate in job-related skills training. In recent months, however, much of this training has focused on managing the short-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic itself. While this is beneficial, if not essential, the extent to which it contributes to longer-term skills development is unclear. Once immediate danger of the pandemic passes, other trends

will once again come to the fore, such as those related to technological change. Canadian employers have traditionally under-invested in skills training, a situation that places all employees, including younger ones, at a disadvantage in a rapidly changing world. The negative effects of this under-investment risk becoming even more evident post-pandemic.

Whether these various setbacks are temporary or longer lasting remains to be seen. Younger Canadians adversely affected by the pandemic may quickly “catch up” once workplaces and educational institutions fully re-open, or they may face a longer-lasting disadvantages – as has been the case for younger workers caught up in previous recessions.



*Younger Canadians adversely affected by the pandemic may quickly “catch up” once workplaces and educational institutions fully re-open, or they may face a longer-lasting disadvantages*

In this context, it is worth emphasizing that, in the case of younger adults, a recovery does not mean simply picking up where they left off before the pandemic hit. They will not be trying to get back to something they had previously established, but will be trying to start something new – after more than a year of interruption. They will be trying to start a postsecondary education, or looking for their first career-related job. And in doing so, in a post-lockdown context, they will be competing with a new cohort of younger Canadians behind them. Colleges and universities will review new applications, both from those who just completed high school, and those who completed high school just as the pandemic set in. Employers will receive applications from new postsecondary graduates, and those who graduated in 2020 as the economy shut down. In short, those whose education or employment was put on pause for much of two years could all too easily fall between the cracks. Should this happen, the impact of the pandemic on their lives will be long-lasting, in stark contrast to their older counterparts, whose lives might quickly return to the way they were before.

To ensure this does not happen, governments, educational institutions, and employers all need to adopt deliberate measures that take the experiences of this age cohort into account. This includes not just young adults in general, but specific groups whose work or education plans were more likely to be up-ended, notably young adults who identify as Indigenous, young adults who identify as Black and young adults with a disability. It also includes those who recently completed their postsecondary studies, and who, because of the pandemic, have so far been unable to realize a return on their investment in their education and skills. Pathways need to be established to help some catch up, through additional training or support. Gaps in resumés should be expected and overlooked. Extra places in classrooms and workplaces will need to be made for a “double cohort” of new applicants. And research on education and employment outcomes should continue to focus on the experience of these Canadians, to ensure that the recovery does not leave them behind.

